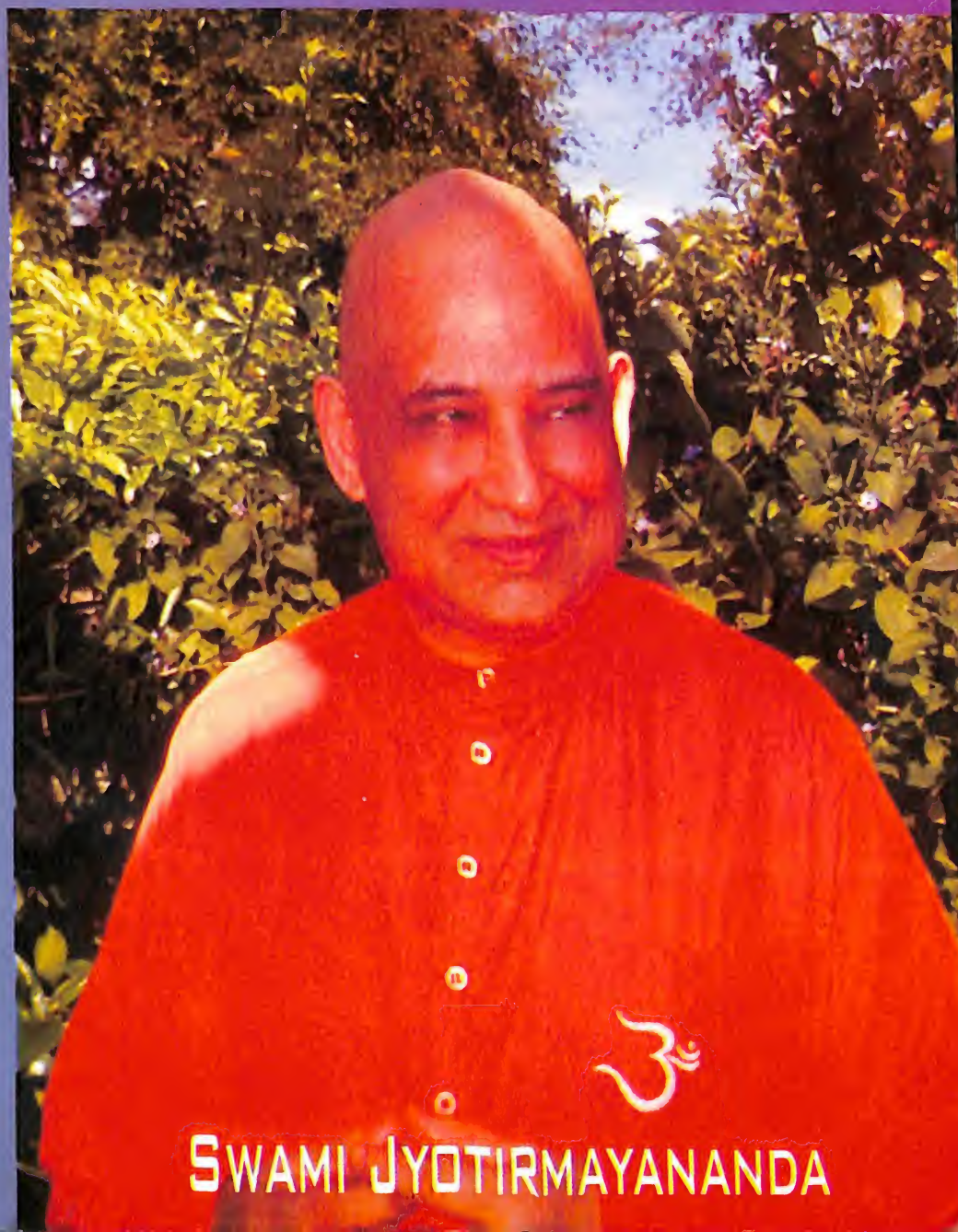


YOGA VASISTHA

Vol.1
VAIRAGYA
MUMUKSHU
UTPATTI



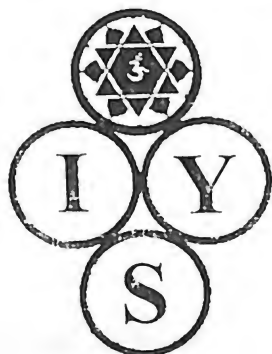
SWAMI JYOTIRMAYANANDA



YOGA VASISHTHA

Vol. I

Vairagya Mumukshu Utpatti



by

Swami Jyotirmayananda

Price Rs.100.00

PUBLISHER'S NOTE

Here comes first volume of the most awaited book "YOGA VASISHTHA VOL-I", the eternal wisdom imparted to Sri Rama by His guru Sri Vasistha. It contains sublime and most inspiring teachings that ignite a blazing fire of dispassion in hearts of spiritual seekers. It is an irony that many people in India are unaware of this nectarine wisdom.

Pujya gurudev Shri Swami Jyotirmayananda published this book a long back in 1977 in USA and only some close Indian devotees of Swami ji were fortunate to read it. Since long its Indian edition was in demand. We are pleased to publish first of expected six volumes for all those who are really interested to get guidance from the profound wisdom of sage Vasishtha.

Yoga Vasishtha is a rare scripture that provides insight into nature of Brahman, purpose of one's existence and techniques of self improvement.

Original text is profound and voluminous like an ocean, but Sri Swami ji has brought out pearls and rubies of immortal wisdom for seekers of the eternal truth.

We are sure that reading this Jewell of all scriptures will transform countless souls and lead them on the path of spiritual enlightenment.

Yogiratna Dr. Shashi Bhushan Mishra

Swami Jyotirmayananda Ashram

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श्री स्वामी ज्योतिर्मयानन्द

PREFACE

Swami Lalitananda

Yoga Vasistha can bring a complete transformation in human personality; even like the beggar of old fairy tales who turned into a King when a charmed golden ring fell into his hand; just so, whosoever holds this book, turning the pages with an inquisitive mind and a heart searching for truth, will discover the infinite beauty of his inner Self.

Yoga Vasistha nourishes the soul and awakens a yearning for freedom and an exquisite peace unknown before.

This unique book par excellence has been long awaited by advanced Vedantins and Yogis of India, because it is only available in rare editions of the last century. And it is what the enquiring mind of the West has been desperately needing since they heard the remarks of Schopenhauer, "In the whole world there is no study so beneficial and so elevating as that of the Upanishads. It has been the solace of my life; it will be the solace of my death." There are a few publications at present which are not sufficient to portray the total beauty and wisdom of Yoga Vasistha.

H.H. Sri Swami Jyotir Maya Nanda, internationally known lecturer and writer of over fifty books on Yoga and Vedanta philosophy, has been interpreting and commenting on Yoga Vasistha for almost 25 years: first in India for 9 years at the Yoga Vedanta Forest Academy, Sivananda Ashram.

Himalayas; in Vedantic conferences in Amritsar, Ludhiana, and other parts of India, and also in Dehradun Women's College. Since coming to the West, Swamiji had been lecturing in Puerto Rico for six years, followed by his weekly lectures here in Miami. Available on tapes and cassettes, these lectures are an undying treasure.

We are presenting an abridged version of Yoga Vasistha in two volumes. The first volume contains: Vairagya Prakarana, Mumukshu Vyavahara Prakarana, and a portion of Utpatti Prakarana.

After a brief encounter with Yoga Vasistha, the reader will feel that all other books of philosophy have become like old crumbs on the table, while Yoga Vasistha stands like the sweet, vitalizing elixir of life.

If I could have only one book for some extraordinary reason to read for the rest of my life, I would choose Yoga Vasistha; just as King Shah Jehan had the choice of only one type of food-grain while he was imprisoned for life, and he chose the chickpeas (garbanzo beans) because of its nourishment and adaptability to a variety of tasty dishes.

Yoga Vasistha encompasses in its powerful literature the dramatic stories of the inner states of the mind, and like a brilliant advocate, presents its brief with a convincing voice and expert phrasing, and with its mystic strategy convinces the mind to undermine its fancies and imaginations leading to the realization that the world lies within the mind.

Nothing is more inspiring and soul-stirring as when the mind lifts itself from the quagmire of false perceptions of the senses, and sees the contents of waking, dream and deep sleep as the refractions of the Light of Consciousness filtering through the layers of egoistic illusions.

The awe-inspiring awakening of the knowledge that "You are not this body, not this mind, and not this intellect" is uplifting and produces a vital change in the overall perception of the world. It is for this reason Sages warn immature aspirants against the wrong interpretations of this grand philosophy; they emphasize the fact that the wisdom of the Yoga Vasistha must be received under the guidance of an illumined teacher. For those who are endowed with a mighty strength of intellect, and intense dispassion, Yoga Vasistha brings for them the clouds of mystic understanding that bursts into the flood of unique bliss.

Due to the unfortunate lack of knowledge of Yoga Vasistha, the intelligentsia of the West have been unable to realize the vast treasure of profound knowledge that lies hidden in this great work. Because of this reason, the wisdom of Vedanta has not been deeply understood and assimilated by them.

Yoga Vasistha in its broad spectrum encompasses topics such as: the mysteries of the soul, death and reincarnations, the psychic powers, the mystic energy known as Kundalini, the subtle operations of the unconscious mind which bring about repeated embodiments, and the techniques of spiritual enquiry and meditation.

With his deft hand and eloquent pen, Sri Swami Jyotir Maya Nanda gives to the world his most memorable writing which has been guarded as a secret mystic wealth by the Sages of India for a long time.

The greatest literatures of the world have always incorporated in their writings parables, illustrations, and stories to bring about a striking impression, even like that of a lightning flash, upon the sleeping mind in order that it may awaken sharply to the light of the truth. Yoga Vasistha abounds with these.

It is to be noted that humor and wit permeate the writings and lectures of Sri Swami Jyotir Maya Nanda. They are like the green creeper adorning the tree of liberation. A studious reader will meet for the first time a challenge to his intellect to discover the secret wealth of the Self, and to explore the mysteries of the mind.

This book, written by Sage Sri Swami Jyotir Maya Nanda, presents you with the key to heavenly bliss and perfection; and every page of this book is filled with his blessings.

May the golden sun of your eternal Self rise from behind the horizon of distractions and mental limitations and encompass you in the greatest beauty and sublime love which are the very essence of your real Self!



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Sri Swami Lalitananda

DEDICATION

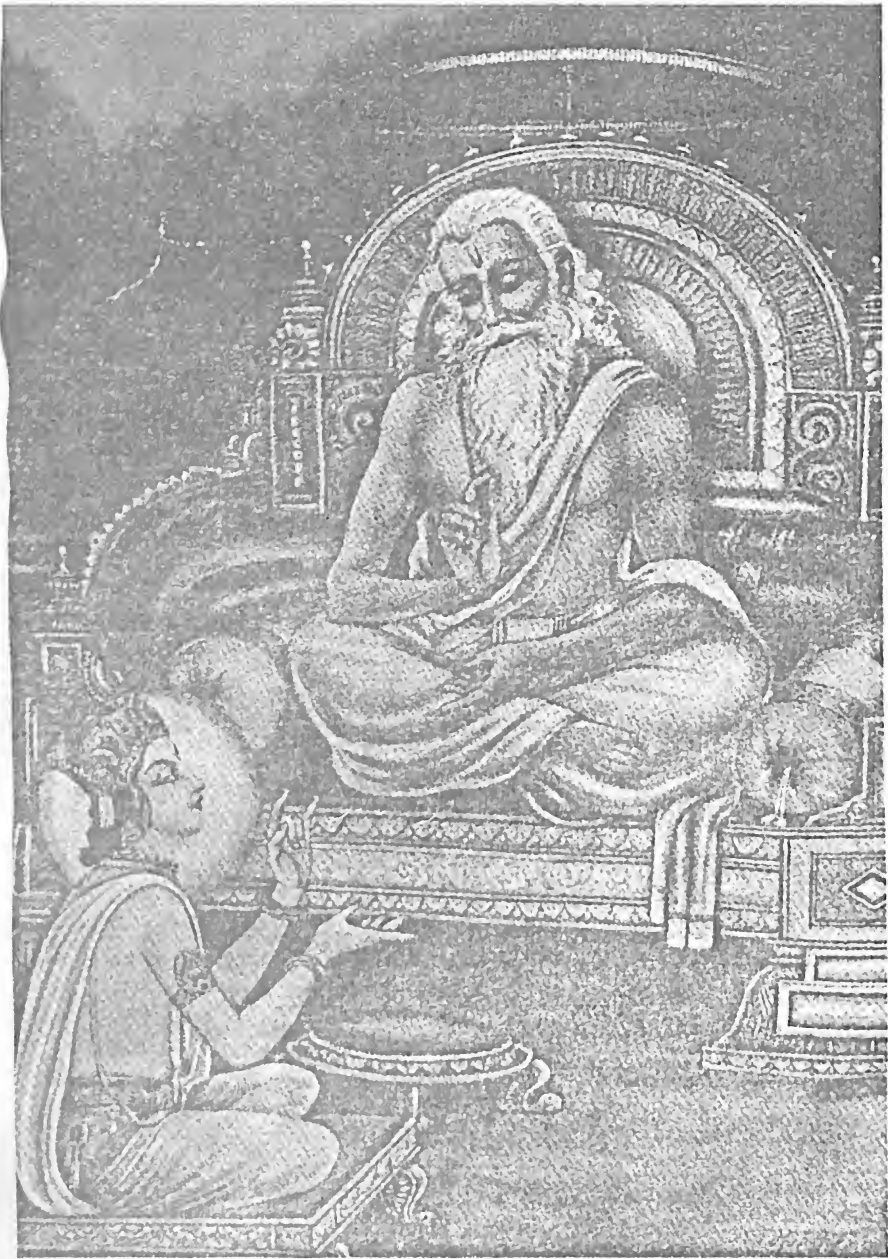
I dedicate this book to Sri Swami Lalitananda, the Vice President of Yoga Research Foundation, who is the illustrious author of 'Yoga in Life,' Editor of my magazine, 'International Yoga Guide,' as well as the poet-composer of 'Yoga Mystic Songs for Meditation' in three volumes.

It was the Vairagya — dispassion and intense aspiration of Sri Swami Lalitananda that resulted in my giving the complete series of lectures on Yoga Vasistha as well as the writing of this present book.

The vast work of promoting my teachings and works in the West has been carried on untiringly, with an unassuming zeal, and utter self-effacement, by this noble Sanyasin for over 15 years. The spiritual world will ever remain deeply indebted to her for the formation and existence of the mighty organization — 'Yoga Research Foundation' which is a fountain source of light and wisdom for spiritual aspirants all over the world.

May God bless her abundantly!

Swami Jyotir Maya Nanda



Sage Vasistha Imparts Spiritual Wisdom to Sri Rama

Courtesy Gita Press, Gorakhpur, India.

ADORATIONS TO SAGE VASISTHA

*BRAHMANANDAM PARAMASUKHADAM
KEVALAM JNANA MURTI*

*DWANDWATEETAM GAGANA SADRISHAM
TATTWAMASYADILAKSHYAM*

*EKAM NITYAM VIMALAMACHALAM
SARVADHEE SAKSHIBHUTAM*

*BHAVATEETAM TRIGUNARAHITAM SRI
VASISTHAM NATAHSMA.*

Adorations to *Brahman*, the giver of supreme bliss, the embodiment of pure consciousness, beyond the pairs of opposites, vast like the ether, knowable by meditation upon the great utterance — "Thou Art That." Adorations to Sage *Vasistha* who is indeed *Brahman*, one without a second, eternal, pure, immutable, the witnessing Self abiding in all beings, beyond the changes and modifications of nature. (*Nirvana Pr. U. 216-26*)

INTRODUCTION

The *Yoga Vasistha Maha-Ramayana*, one of the greatest of all Hindu scriptures, is virtually unknown in the West, due to the scarcity of its English translations.

This vast work of approximately thirty-two thousand verses (sixty-four thousand lines) supplements the epic poem, the *Ramayana*, which is more popularly known throughout India and the world. In the “*Bala-Kanda*” section of the *Ramayana*, it is stated that *Sri Rama* was given spiritual instructions by Sage *Vasistha*. *Yoga Vasistha* is that teaching. Whereas the *Ramayana* describes the epic life and adventures of *Sri Rama*, the *Yoga Vasistha* presents his inner realization in detail for those who wish to intensify their spiritual life and deepen their understanding.

The *Yoga Vasistha* is also known by the following names: *Maha-Ramayana*, *Uttar Ramayana*, *Arsha Ramayana*, *Jnana Vasistha*, *Vasistha Ramayana*, and *Vasistha*. Whatever you choose to call it, it is the earliest detailed work of *Yoga-Vedanta*, and gives a magnificently detailed exposition of the subtleties and insights of that philosophy with a majestic sweep that has never been equalled in any metaphysical work since. It was written by the great poet *Valmiki* (probably about 500 B.C., although maybe much earlier) in the form of dialogue between Sage *Vasistha* and his pupil, the young prince *Rama*.

Every kind of exposition is employed in its sequence — didactic instruction, answers to doubts, parables, and stories within stories. Many key points

of this metaphysical instruction are touched upon over and over again, with increasingly deeper meanings. Therefore, the work appears to move in vast spirals, culminating in the Self-realization of *Sri Rama*.

The interlocking system of stories within stories enhances the vision of worlds within worlds, and of the infinitely complex world of the mind, itself arising within the Cosmic Mind.

In the opening stage, *Sri Rama* relates his growing awareness of the transiency of life and of all worldly aims. A great *Vairagya* (dispassion) arises, which later develops into *Mumukshutwa* (longing for spiritual emancipation). Subsequently, he is fully enlightened by Sage *Vasistha*. In the process, every aspect of Yogic and Vedantic teaching is beautifully and fully developed.

Yoga Vasistha is divided into the following six chapters:

1) *Vairagya Prakarana* (Dispassion)

At Sage *Vasistha*'s request, *Sri Rama* describes the cause of his mind's unusual melancholy state. He elaborates upon the transiency, essencelessness, and changing nature of all objects in this world. These vivid descriptions of the vanity of all worldly pleasures, and of the emptiness of all worldly glories, are meant to promote *Vairagya* (dispassion), which is the first basic requirement for treading the path of wisdom that leads to Self-realization.



श्री स्वामी ज्योतिर्ग्यानन्द

2) *Mumukshu Prakarana* (Aspiration for Self-realization)

This section details upon the qualifications that are necessary before one can seek immortality. One should not rely on destiny, but rather, gain an insight into the fact that the Self in him is the ceaseless source of all energy and creativity. He should befriend one of the four gatekeepers of Liberation (serenity, contentment, spiritual enquiry, and good association). With the help of that one gatekeeper, he will automatically befriend the other three, and finally, enter into the blessed palace of Liberation.

3) *Utpatti Prakarana* (The Origin of the World-process)

“*Utpatti Prakarana*” is an exposition on how the world evolved from the Absolute and is ever rooted in the Absolute. In fact, the world is an appearance sustained by the limitations of the mind. When these limitations are overcome by intuitive wisdom, it becomes non-existent.

4) *Sthiti Prakarana* (The Sustaining Reality of the Self)

This section explains how an aspirant, having attained knowledge, can abide in *Brahman*, even though the world continues to appear. The underlying Reality behind the ego-sense in man is the Absolute. When the illusion of duality is negated by wisdom, a Yogi lives and sports in *Brahman*. The Self is realized as the creator as well as the enjoyer of the universe.

5) *Upashāma Prakarana* (Quiescence of the Mind)

Herein *Yoga Vasistha* deals with the stupendous experience of peace that results from spiritual Enlightenment. The characteristics of a Self-realized

Sage are described in glowing terms. This section also gives instructions for the removal of *Ahamkara* (egoism), for the promotion of equal vision, and for the attainment of absolute detachment from the world-process.

6) *Nirvana Prakarana* (Liberation)

This voluminous section is divided in two parts: In the first, entitled *Purva Bhaga*, the Yogi discovers his essential nature. He realizes his true identity as *Brahman*, the underlying Reality behind all individual beings, as well as the universe. He becomes all that is. In this section, *Sri Rama* enters into divine ecstasy.

In the second part, *Uttara Bhaga*, *Yoga Vasistha* presents the beatific vision of *Nirvana* (Liberation), which is the extinction of all cravings. Sage *Vasistha* describes his own personal experiences of *Samadhi* and of the majestic vision of the entire universe being nothing but the Self.

In conclusion, *Sri Rama* attained enlightenment. But instead of turning away from the practical duties of the world, he prepared himself to perform them even as the great Divinities who create, sustain and destroy the world — with a spirit of absolute detachment.



VAIRAGYA PRAKARANA

*Yatah Sarvani Bhutani Pratibhanti Sthitani Cha
Yatraivopashamam Yanti Tasmai Satyatmane Namah. 1*

*Jnata Jnanam Tatha Jyeyam Drashta Darshan Drishyabhuh
Karta Hetuh Kriya Yasmattasmai Jnatyatmane Namah. 2*

*Sphuranti Sikara Yasmat Anandasyambarevanau
Sarvesham Jivanam Tasmai Brahmanandatmane Namah. 3*

Invocation

Adorations to the Self in the form of Truth, by the light of whom all beings shine, and in whom all beings exist, and unto whom all beings go to find their supreme rest.

Adorations to the Self in the form of Consciousness who is the source of the knower, known and knowledge: seer, seen and sight, actor, cause of action, and action.

Adorations to the Self in the form of the Bliss of *Brahman* from the vast ocean, of which all the delights of the world proceed as gentle dewdrops that sustain the lives of gods, men and all beings.

VAIRAGYA PRAKARANA: 1st Section

Sutikshna and Agasti

Once upon a time there was a *Brahmin*, *Sutikshna*, whose mind became overcome with doubts. Having approached the *Ashrama* of Sage *Agasti*, he asked with profound reverence:

O Sage, you are the knower of *Dharma* (the secrets of righteousness); you have churned the cream of all the scriptures. I have a great doubt in my mind. Please instruct me so that the doubt may be dispelled.

Is action (*Karma*) the cause of *Moksha* (liberation), or is it wisdom that accomplishes freedom of the Self; or is it both, the blend of *Karma* and wisdom? Please tell me which of these is the cause of liberation?

Sage *Agasti* said: A bird flies on two wings. In the same way, the soul soars towards the Supreme Abode of Liberation on the wings of *Jnana* (wisdom) and *Karma* (action).

Neither by mere action, nor by mere knowledge can the state of liberation be acquired; but by a blend of both, *Moksha* is realized. Both, therefore, constitute the means to liberation.

In this context, I am going to relate some ancient history to you.

Karunya and Agniveshya

Sage *Agasti* began: In the days of yore there was a *Brahmin* known as *Karunya* who was a scholar of the *Vedas*. He was the son of *Agniveshya*, learned in the *Vedas* and *Vedangas*. Having studied all these under a Guru, he returned to his father's home.

Having returned, he continued to be immersed in confusion and abstained from the performance of *Karmas* (religious rites and duties of life). Having observed this, his father approached his inactive son in the following manner.

Agniveshya asked (for the benefit of his son): O child, why have you ceased from performing your duties? Tell me, how can you attain success if you remain inactive? Please present before me the cause of your withdrawal from activities.

Karunya answered: The *Shrutis* (the *Upanishads*) and *Smritis* (codes of ethical laws) enjoin that as long as one lives one must perform *Agnihotra* (fire-sacrifice) and daily religious rites. *Dharma* (righteousness) is of the nature of *Pravritti* (activity).

At the same time, they also declare that *Moksha* or liberation cannot be attained by wealth, or by activity, or by progeny; it is solely by renunciation that seekers after truth attain supreme freedom.

Tell me, my Guru (father), of these two ordinances, which should be followed by me? Being confused on this account, I have become indifferent to the performance of works.

Agasti said: Having thus spoken to his father, *Karunya* became quiet. His father, *Agniveshya*, then answered his silent son in the following manner:

Dear child, I will relate to you a beautiful story. Please listen, and having fully considered its significance, do as you like.

Suruchi and Devaduta

Once there sat a heavenly damsel, *Suruchi*, the best of the *Apsaras*, on a mountain peak in the Himalayas that abounded with peacocks.

Here the *Kinnaras* (beings of the astral world), afflicted with desire, sported with their mates; and the heavenly stream of Ganges flowed on, washing away the sins of the people.

In these picturesque surroundings, *Suruchi* saw a messenger of *Indra* (the Lord of the heavenly beings) soaring through the sky; then, this most fortunate *Apsara* addressed the Divine Messenger:

O Great One! Where are you coming from? Where are you going? Please tell me all this.

The Divine Messenger replied: O beautiful *Apsara*, you have asked a very good question. I will answer you accordingly.

Arishtanemi and Devaduta

There lives a royal Sage, *Arishtanemi*, who, having given his kingdom to his son, abides in the forest, devoid of desires, and devoted to righteousness. The King is performing austerities on the *Gandha Madana* mountains where the fragrance from herbs intoxicates the mind .



Saruchi and Devadatta

Devaduta (the Divine Messenger) continued: O beautiful lady, listen. I shall relate to you all that has happened with *Arishtanemi*. *Indra* commanded me to take a heavenly chariot, bearing dancing *Apsaras* with their musical instruments, and furnished with a band of *Gandharvas*, *Siddhas*, *Yakshas* and *Kinnaras* (celestial beings), to King *Arishtanemi* in order to invite him to the heavenly world.

Accordingly, I drove the celestial *Vimana* (the heavenly chariot) to *Arishtanemi* and delivered to him the message of the Heavenly Lord *Indra*.

Hearing my words, King *Arishtanemi* was reluctant to accept the gifts of *Indra*.

King *Arishtanemi* said: O Divine Messenger, tell me, what are the advantages and disadvantages of the heavenly world? Please enlighten me on this point. Then I will decide whether to accept the heavenly joys or not.

The Messenger of God said: Heavenly joys are experienced according to the meritorious Karmas of the souls. Those who have the highest type of meritorious Karma in their possession enjoy the highest delights in the Heavens. Those who have the medium type enjoy the medium form of joy; and those who have the lowest type of meritorious Karma enjoy the lowest forms of heavenly delight.

Due to this variation in heavenly pleasures, the minds of the heavenly dwellers are also afflicted with jealousy, a sense of competition, hatred and elation. When the meritorious Karma is exhausted, the souls witness their fall from the heavenly regions. They must again enter into embodiments on earth in order to ascend the spirals of spiritual movement.

The King, having heard this, said: O Messenger, I do not wish to go to the Heavenly worlds where the enjoyments are perishable and defective. I will give up my body by performing intense austerity, just as a snake gives up its skin and glides on. I will not ascend to the heavenly worlds.

The Heavenly Messenger continued: I carried the celestial chariot back to *Indra* and related to him the convictions of the King. At this, *Indra* was struck with surprise. He commanded me again in a soft voice: Go, my messenger, to the King and take him to the *Ashrama* (spiritual hermitage) of Sage *Valmiki*. Relate my message to Sage *Valmiki*, that he may instruct the King for the attainment of liberation.

The Messenger: Accordingly, I took the King to Sage *Valmiki* and related to the Sage the wishes of *Indra*. The Sage welcomed the King and listened to his spiritual enquiries.

King Arishtanemi and Sage Valmiki

The King asked Sage *Valmiki*: O Great Seer, you are the greatest among the knowers of Truth; your very presence ensures my welfare. I wish to learn from you the art of escaping the miseries of the world. I am afflicted with the sorrows of the world-process. Please instruct me so that I may become liberated from all forms of pain and sorrow.

At this, Sage *Valmiki* said to the King: I will relate to you the story of the *Ramayana* which expounds the nature of the indivisible *Brahman* (the Absolute). When you listen to its teachings, you will attain liberation in life.

The *Ramayana* is in the form of a dialogue between *Rama* and Sage *Vasistha*. This is a potent method for attaining Self-realization and is highly propitious. You are a fit aspirant to listen to this teaching.

King *Arishtanemi* asked: O best among the knowers of Truth, who is *Rama*? What is his nature? In what family was he born? Was he in bondage or in the state of liberation? Please tell me all this.

Therefore, Sage *Valmiki* explained how the Divine *Vishnu* chose to incarnate among the mortals, having accepted curses from various persons.

The Story of the Divine Incarnation

Once the Divine Being was cursed by *Sanat Kumara*. It so happened that in the assembly of *Brahma*, *Sanat Kumara* did not rise from his seat when Lord *Vishnu* made his entrance. At this, Lord *Vishnu* cursed *Sanat Kumara* to become an ordinary mortal and to experience the miseries of an embodied individual. In turn, *Sanat Kumara* cursed *Vishnu* to be born as a human being and to lose his omniscience and omnipotence for a little while.

Another curse was pronounced on *Vishnu* by the Sage *Bhrigu* when he saw his wife merge in *Vishnu*.

Vishnu was again cursed by the wife of the demon *Jalandhara*, *Vrinda*; because Lord *Vishnu* beguiled her by assuming the form of her husband.

Again, when Lord *Vishnu* incarnated as *Nrisimha* (Man-lion), the pregnant wife of *Devadatta*

was killed out of fear. Thus *Devadatta* pronounced a curse on *Vishnu*.

Mystic Implications of Divine Embodiment

The scripture points out four causes for embodiment of the Divine Self.

(1) *Sanat Kumara* represents the *Chitta* or the Mind-stuff. Lord *Vishnu* represents the Self. The predicament of "individuation" of the Supreme Self is caused by the veil of ignorance that obscures the transparency of the *Chitta*. The basic cause of the embodiment of the soul is expressed through this story.

It is, as it were, the *Chitta* that curses the Self; and in turn, the Self curses the *Chitta*. The description is figurative and highly mystic.

Hindu scriptures are replete with such stories which can be taken at surface value as well as at the deeper level of mystic understanding. In both cases, the stories are meant to fill the heart with devotion and insight.

(2) The curse of *Bhrigu* reveals this following significance: Sage *Bhrigu* represents Ego, while his wife represents intellect. With the advancing spiritual movement, the intellect loses its association with Ego and merges with the Cosmic Self through intuition. It is the inability to promote this spiritual merger of the intellect that becomes the basis of repeated births and deaths.

(3) In the episode of Demon *Jalandhara* and his wife *Vrinda*, the story has it that the Demon *Jalandhara* became very powerful and used this power

against the gods in the heavens. It was *Vrinda's* devotion and fidelity to him that enabled him to be so powerful. Lord *Vishnu* accomplished that demon's destruction by deceiving *Vrinda*. Having assumed the form of *Jalandhara*, he led her to infidelity. When *Vrinda* detected this deceit on the part of *Vishnu*, she cursed him to embody himself as a mortal subject to human grief.

Here is the spiritual implication. The demon *Jalandhara* represents the *Tamasic* Ego – Ego dominated by the principle of inertia. His wife *Vrinda* represents the “feeling” aspect of personality. In the state of bondage, the feeling aspect of personality is chastely devoted to Ego. This is the secret of the subsistence of the ego-center. But through a spiritual movement, the Divine Self steals into the chambers of one's feelings, and unawares, the latter loses its fidelity to Ego. This development, wherein feeling is converted into spiritual love, destroys and transcends the ego-principle.

The story of *Vrinda's* curse is suggestive of that state of development wherein the feeling aspect is reluctant to undergo spiritual transformation. This continues to sustain the individualized state of the Self.

(4) In the story of *Devadatta*, whose pregnant wife expired at the sight of the terrible form of *Vishnu* as *Nrisimha* (Man-lion), the significance is: *Devadatta* represents the individual soul, and his wife represents desire, which is pregnant with a *Mayaic* development. With the vision of *Nrisimha* (Divine Will), the soul is rid of desire.

In these four allegorical stories given as explanations of Divine Incarnation, the Sages have

presented the four aspects of bondage caused by Ignorance or *Avidya*. When the veil of ignorance is removed by wisdom, the soul recovers its essential identity as the Absolute.

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF A STORY WITHIN A STORY

In *Yoga Vasistha*, the world is presented as a long dream of the soul, from which it must wake up to realize its essential nature as *Brahman*, the Absolute.

The world is like a dream within a dream, a mind within a mind, an illusion within an illusion. This theme is set forth in the commencement of this vast work in the form of a series of stories:

(1) *Sutikshna* approaches *Agasti* for enlightenment. *Agasti* tells the following story:

(2) *Karunya* seeks to be enlightened by his father *Agniveshya*. The latter tells the following story:

(3) *Suruchi*, a heavenly *Apsara*, diverting herself in the picturesque atmosphere of the Himalayas, listens to *Devaduta*, the Divine Messenger, who tells the following story:

(4) King *Arishtanemi*, having renounced the pleasures of the heavenly worlds, sought the nature of the Self at the feet of Sage *Valmiki*. The latter introduces the following story:

(5) Lord *Rama*, the Divine Incarnation of Lord *Vishnu*, is instructed by Sage *Vasistha* so that he might recover the essential nature of His Divine Self. This is the central story encompassing the teachings of this great work.

(6) Sage *Valmiki* further introduces the story of himself and his disciple, *Bharadwaja*, who was the first recipient of his great work – *Yoga Vasistha*.

Throughout the writings of *Yoga Vasistha*, the spiritual teachings are being given to these six aspirants by *Agasti*, *Agniveshya*, *Devaduta*, *Valmiki* and *Vasistha*.

There is a mystic implication at each of these six levels of spiritual teaching:

(1) *Sutikshna* literally means sharp or subtle. *Agasti* is a name for the effulgent sun. The approach of *Sutikshna* to *Agasti* implies the movement of the intellect towards intuition. This is the basic theme of the spiritual movement. An aspirant who is aware of this basic picture of spiritual movement is of the highest type.

(2) The approach of *Karunya* (one who is in grief and confusion) to *Agniveshya* (one who is an embodiment of fire) is symbolic of the need of the *Chitta* (mind-stuff) to be permeated by the Fire of *Samadhi* (superconsciousness). One who lacks the subtlest form of intellect needs to purify his mind through the practice of *Raja Yoga*. Thus, he can allow the Karmic impressions to be consumed in the fire of *Samadhi*. This level belongs to the aspirants who are the next to the best type.

(3) *Suruchi* (good taste) approaches the Divine Messenger (Spiritual Inclination). This is symbolic of the integration of sentiments required on the path of spiritual movement. This is the theme of *Bhakti Yoga* (the path of devotion) adopted by those aspirants in whom sentiments are more predominant.

The scripture of *Yoga Vasistha* provides such entertaining discourses that the aspirant is tempted by mere mental diversion at the outset; but he is gradually led to spiritual heights. The aspirants at this level are mediocre in nature.

(4) King *Arishtanemi* (the destroyer of evil) symbolizes the movement of *Rajas* (active energy) towards Sage *Valmiki* (the Purity of Nature – *Sattwa*). Sage *Valmiki* was so called because he emerged out of an ant-hill after a prolonged state of *Samadhi*. This emergence is symbolic of transcending the body through the increasing development of *Sattwa* or purity. *Rajas* (active energy) is transmuted into *Sattwa* (harmony and purity) in the process of spiritual development. This story sets forth the nature of these inner movements on the spiritual path.

(5) The story of Lord *Rama* (the Divine Self in a state of embodiment) and Sage *Vasistha* (the Self established in the highest state of liberation) depicts an integral movement of the soul towards the state of Self-realization. With Lord *Rama* as the ideal disciple, the teachings of Sage *Vasistha* cover every aspect of spiritual movement.

(6) The mention of Sage *Valmiki* and his disciple *Bharadwaja* is to highlight the need of a Guru-Disciple relationship for attaining spiritual knowledge.

Thus, these six points indicate different types of aspirants, different processes of transformation in the personality of an aspirant, and the all-comprehensive account of spiritual movement that is being presented through the work of *Yoga Vasistha*.

GITA AND YOGA VASISTHA

The immortal teachings of the *Gita* are presented through the very lips of Divine *Krishna* to his immortal friend, *Arjuna*, on the battlefield of *Kurukshetra*. *Arjuna* was confused as to whether he should engage himself in action, or shun the righteous war and devote himself to meditation and renunciation. Lord *Krishna* leads *Arjuna* on towards that understanding which upholds the activity of life without upsetting the serenity of the soul. He teaches the art of harmonizing wisdom and action -- renunciation and activity.

The theme of *Yoga Vasistha* is similar. The basic problem is presented through the words of *Sutikshna* who wants to know whether liberation can be attained by mere knowledge (renunciation), or by mere activity (*Pravritti*), or by a combination of both. To this he receives a brief reply that just as a bird soars on both wings, so too the soul soars unto *Brahman* on the wings of knowledge and action.

The blending of knowledge and action is a profound mystery. It is this mystery that is being elaborately explored through the great work of *Yoga Vasistha*.

While the *Gita* is a work as precise as the *Sutras* (aphorisms of ancient philosophical discoveries), the work of *Yoga Vasistha* abounds with elaborate expositions on the same problem and its solution.

Viewed from a different perspective, *Yoga Vasistha* portrays the Divine Self assuming the role of

a princely disciple and listening to the message of the higher Self presented by *Sage Vasistha*. Having attained enlightenment, he realizes, "I am the Divine Self," and engages himself in the performance of the mission in life for which he was born.

Thus concludes the first section in *Vairagya Prakarana* entitled *Sutra Patanaka* – the Introduction.



YOGA VASISTHA

SUTRA PATANIKA: 2nd Section (Introduction)

Adorations to the Self of all, who is in the heavens, in the sky, in the earth, within and without, and by whose light all these shine.

The Qualified Student

Valmiki said: He who feels that he is imprisoned in the world, and that he must attain release; he whose aspiration is intense; he who is neither too ignorant, nor fully enlightened — such a person is qualified for listening to the expositions of *Yoga Vasistha*.

The aspirant who has studied the *Purva Ramayana* with devotion as the first step, must meditate upon the means of liberation as they are being expounded in *Yoga Vasistha*. Such an aspirant will be released from the cycle of birth and death.

(*Purva Ramayana*, widely known as the *Ramayana*, was written by Sage *Valmiki* to promote devotion in the human mind towards the Divine Incarnation, *Rama*. This epic poem is highly elevating, inspiring, and purifying. It contains the life and divine sports of Lord *Rama* in this world-process. Later, the *Ramayana* was presented by Saint *Tulsidas* in the Hindi language in the 16th century A.D.. This Hindi version is honored by most people in India with great reverence. It is the Bible of the Hindus. The *Ramayana* and the *Gita* constitute the fundamentals of Hindu culture and philosophy.)



Brahma inspires Sage Valmiki for writing Yoga Vasistha

Valmiki continued: Having composed the *Purva Ramayana*, I offered it to my disciple, *Bharadwaja*, just as the ocean presents its gems to their seekers.

The wise *Bharadwaja* recounted the story of the *Ramayana* before the Creator (*Brahma*) seated in a forest in the *Sumeru* Mountains. *Brahma*, being highly pleased, told *Bharadwaja* to ask for any boon that he liked. At this, *Bharadwaja* said: O Lord, you are the master of the past, present and future. Please present to me the means by which people in the world may become free from all miseries and sorrows.

Brahma said: Hasten to *Valmiki*, your Guru, and request him to compose *Uttar Ramayana* (*Yoga Vasistha*). It will serve as a bridge to take the aspirants across the ocean of the world-process.

So eager was the Creator for the work of *Yoga Vasistha* that He accompanied *Bharadwaja* to the Ashram of *Valmiki*, and having commanded the Sage to complete the work of *Yoga Vasistha*, He vanished just as a wave is withdrawn in the ocean..

(*Brahma* is the Cosmic Mind. The advent of *Brahma* is indicative of the increasing cosmic communion that Sage *Valmiki* experienced while he was writing *Yoga Vasistha*.)

Bharadwaja, in order to help the development of this great philosophical work, asked: How did the wise *Rama*, his brothers *Bharata*, *Lakshmana* and *Shatruga*, his wife *Sita*, and his enlightened ministers and their sons conduct themselves in order to cross

the ocean of the world-process? Please give me those instructions by which I and other people in the world may attain release and follow their footsteps.

Valmiki said: I will explain to you in detail the nature of the Self; and hearing this, your mind will become purified.

The Divine *Rama* realized the illusoriness of the world; he conducted himself among objects without attachment, and experienced infinite bliss. If you follow his example, you too will become happy.

The high-souled *Lakshmana*, *Bharata*, *Shatrughna*, Queen Mother *Kaushalya*, *Sumitra*, *Sita* (*Rama's* wife), the Royal Father *Dasharatha*, friends of *Rama* such as *Kritastra* and *Avirodha*, the Royal Preceptor *Vasistha*, *Vamadeva* – all these were enlightened personalities.

The eight ministers of *Rama* – *Dhrishtī*, *Jayanta*, *Bhasa*, the truthful *Vijaya*, *Vibhishana*, *Sushena*, *Hanuman*, and *Indrajit* (the minister of *Sugriva*) – they were all Self-realized personalities.

If you conduct yourself the way those enlightened personalities did in day to day life, you will surely become free from the world-process.

Endowed with the strength of wisdom, you may save yourself even though caught in the howling waves of the world-process in the form of grief, distress, and various forms of misery; and having crossed the world-process, you may enjoy eternal satisfaction.

Section 3 — *The Nature of Wisdom*
(*The Pilgrimage of Rama*)

Bharadwaja said to Sage *Valmiki*: Adopting the example of *Sri Rama*, please explain to me the gradual stages leading to the state of liberation in life, so that I may experience supreme bliss.

Sage *Valmiki* replied: O *Bharadwaja*, just as blueness is seen in the sky, in the same way, the illusion of the world-process is seen in *Brahman* — the Absolute Self.

As long as the world phenomena do not disappear by the realization that, "All this is false," so long the spiritual knowledge is not firmly rooted in one's heart.

(In the state of Self-realization, a Yogi sees the world rooted in the mind. He sees that it is the Light of the Self that assumes the forms of the objects and the relativity of time and space through the screen of the mind. Having thus perceived oneness, he abides in the non-dual Self wherein the world is completely effaced. Though living in the world, his vision is constantly rooted in the unreality of the world and in the reality of the Self.)

O sinless *Bharadwaja*, this world is false. It appears to exist like colors seen in the sky through a defective vision. But by the wisdom that is laid down in this scripture, this apparent world can be effaced.

“The visible world does not exist” — this knowledge leads to the effacement of the impressions of objectivity in the mind. With this effacement, there emerges the supreme bliss of *Nirvana* (liberation).

Without the aid of a scripture such as this, people are led to fall from one illusory knowledge to another presented by so many fictitious writings on spiritual matters. By adopting such false teachings, one cannot attain liberation even in a thousand years.

Complete eradication of the *Vasanas* (subtle desires) is the true state of *Moksha* (liberation). He alone can realize this state who is free from the impurity of *Avidya* (ignorance).

With the absence of cold, mist and fog dissolve leaving no trace behind. In the same way, with the destruction of the *Vasanas* (subtle desires), the *Chitta* (mind-stuff) disappears, leaving behind the infinite expansion of the Self.

Just as a subtle thread sustains a garland of pearls, in the same way, this physical body is sustained by the subtle threads of *Vasanas* (subtle desires).

Vasana is of two types: pure and impure. Impure *Vasana* is the cause of rebirth, but pure *Vasana* leads to the cessation of the wheel of birth and death.

The impure *Vasana* sprouts in the fertile soil of Ignorance (*Avidya*), and grows luxuriantly with manifold branches of love and hatred. It is protected and nourished by the *Ahamkara* (the ego-principle).

This *Maitra Vasana* (impure subtle desire) is the cause of repeated births and deaths.

On the other hand, the *Vasanas* that have been rendered as unproductive as roasted seeds, which are meant only to sustain the body of the Sage, are called *Shubha Vasanas* – pure subtle desires.*

Pure *Vasana* is the eradicator of the process of rebirth. It exists in the personality of a Sage just as a circle of fire is seen due to the revolution of a firebrand. (The personality of a Sage is sustained by the fructifying Karmas of the past. Due to his wisdom, the Sage has no perception at all of his individualized state. But to others, his personality continues to exist, even as an illusory circle is perceived on the basis of a firebrand's rotation.)

The Pilgrimage of Rama

Sage *Valmiki* continued: O *Bharadwaja*, I shall relate to you the process by which *Sri Rama* attained *Jivanmukti* – liberation in life. Listen to this auspicious story which will enable you to attain liberation.

Having returned from *Gurukula* (the ancient form of school), *Sri Rama* lived happily for some time. King *Dasharatha*, his father, ruled over his kingdom with righteousness and justice. Peace prevailed everywhere.

In the course of time, *Sri Rama* became desirous of visiting holy places. He approached his father, King *Dasharatha*, and sought his permission, saying:

Reverential father, you have never turned away a suppliant. I long to visit holy places and the hermitages of the ascetics. Please permit me.

King *Dasharatha*, with the consultation of Sage *Vasistha*, gave his permission. Then on an auspicious day, the *Brahmanas* recited Vedic chants, the Queen Mothers showered their loving blessings, and in the midst of auspicious benedictions from the inhabitants of *Ayodhya*, *Sri Rama* departed for the pilgrimage along with his brothers *Lakshmana* and *Shatrughna*. *Bharata* was absent because he was at the house of his maternal grandfather.

Sri Rama visited many holy places at the banks of *Sarayu*, *Ganga*, *Yamuna*, *Saraswati*, and other holy rivers. He visited sacred places in *Prayag*, *Naimisharanya*, *Kedarnath*, *Pushkar*, *Gaya*,

Manasarovar and many others. He visited the *Ashramas* (hermitages) of Sages and Saints. He bathed in sacred streams and gave away enormous wealth in charity to the *Brahmanas*. He practised austerity and meditation. Then, just as *Shiva* returned to *Kailasha*, he returned to *Ayodhya* amidst great rejoicings.

The description of this pilgrimage is symbolic of the preparatory qualifications for attaining wisdom. Various religious rites, including pilgrimages, are performed for purifying the mind.

Section 4 – *The Daily Life of Rama*

After *Sri Rama's* return from his pilgrimage, eight days were spent in festive celebrations. *Sri Rama* lived for a while joyously at home.

He rose early in the morning and performed the religious rites. Then he went to the royal court of his father and listened to spiritual teachings from Sage *Vasistha* and others. Later he went out for sport with the permission of his elders.

Then in the evening hours, he performed his religious rites and conversed with his beloved companions – his brothers and his friends.

Thus did *Sri Rama* pass his days at his father's palace. His conduct was enchanting to others; he delighted the hearts of all people who lived around him.

Section 5 – *Rama's Dejection*

Later, *Sri Rama* had attained fifteen years of age, and so had his brothers *Lakshmana*, *Bharata* and

Shatrughna. Bharata lived at the home of his paternal grandfather.

Then gradually, just as a lake shrinks to a smaller size in winter, so too, *Rama* began to wither day by day. His lotus-like face became pale. He sat motionless like a painted picture, ever engrossed in anxiety. And his brothers followed his example. They too became immersed in grief.

King *Dasharatha*, deeply concerned at this, asked *Sri Rama* about the cause of his grief; but *Sri Rama* would not state any cause for his sorrow.

Then *Dasharatha* enquired of Sage *Vasistha* regarding the condition of *Sri Rama*. Sage *Vasistha* answered: O King, do not let this give rise to sorrow. *Sri Rama's* grief will turn out to be auspicious. Great men are not overcome by anger, dejection and elation due to petty causes. *Sri Rama* is not overcome by sorrow due to ordinary reasons.

Spiritual movement is based upon the foundation of dispassion. Dispassion, or Vairagya, arises as a result of an integrated mind. As the mind is purified, the world of sense-enjoyments is unable to please the mind. The intellect yearns to solve the riddle of existence. This stage is marked by grief in the mind of an aspirant. But unlike sentimental griefs arising out of petty causes, this grief is a precursor of an auspicious movement leading to Self-realization. Yoga Vasistha portrays the spiritual movement in an ideal aspirant — Sri Rama—in order to present the wealth of spiritual wisdom before mankind.

Section 6 — *The Arrival of Vishwamitra*

King *Dasharatha* waited patiently for the opportune conditions when *Sri Rama* might be freed

from his misery. And it so happened that Sage *Vishwamitra* was performing austerity in a nearby forest, but demons began to disturb his practices. His sacrificial alter was rendered impure by demons pouring flesh, blood and impure materials over it.

Sage *Vishwamitra*, therefore, proceeded to King *Dasharatha* to seek the aid of Divine *Rama* for the performance of an unobstructed sacrifice. Although the Sage could have destroyed the demons by a wrathful curse, he would not have his spiritual merits consumed in the fire of anger.

The advent of Sage *Vishwamitra* was announced to King *Dasharatha* by his gatekeepers. The Sage shone with divine luster due to his asceticism. The very surroundings beamed with the light of spirituality emanating from the effulgent face of *Vishwamitra*.

King *Dasharatha* hastened to the Sage, along with Sage *Vasistha* and other Sages and ministers. They saw *Vishwamitra* with his majestic personality and elegant form lit up with spiritual luster. He appeared as the very embodiment of Divine Grace. Spiritual nectar seemed to flow from his visage.

King *Dasharatha* bowed his head at the feet of *Vishwamitra* and greeted him with soft and sweet words:

O Sage, you have graced me in the same way as the sun graces a lake full of lotus blossoms. I offer you as a gift whatever you desire. The purpose of your arrival will be fulfilled by me. Please command, and I will obey.

Hearing these words, Sage *Vishwamitra* was immensely pleased.

Section 7 – *Vishwamitra's Request for Rama*

Pleased with the hospitality of the King, Sage *Vishwamitra* said: O King, you are descended from a noble race and are guided by Sage *Vasistha* himself. Please listen to what I have to say to you.

Whenever I commence the performance of a *Yajna* (sacrifice) for the attainment of spiritual perfection (*Siddhi*), terrible *Rakshasas* (demons) appear and obstruct the successful process of the sacrifice.

They destroy the sacrificial altar, shower flesh and blood, and thus, destroy the sanctity of the sacrifice.

Now I have come to you as one seeking refuge. I am in distress, and I require your help for the unobstructed performance of the *Yajna* (sacrifice).

I could destroy the *Rakshasas* (demons) by the fire of my anger. But I restrain myself lest my virtues be destroyed in the process.

Your son, *Sri Ramachandra*, is verily a lion for destroying the elephant-like demons. Protected by me, he will destroy all the terrible demons, and I will be able to perform my sacrifice unobstructedly. This will lead me to the attainment of spiritual perfection (*Siddhi*).

Please do not waver from your promise due to your affection for *Rama*. These demons are as if already destroyed. *Sri Rama* is not an ordinary person; he is a great soul. This fact is known by me as well as by Sages like *Sri Vasistha*. Therefore, give *Sri Rama* to me until the successful performance of the sacrifice.

Thus saying, *Vishwamitra* resumed silence.

A keen student of Yoga may easily discern a mystic implication in this development. Sri Rama represents the ideal movement of spirit on the path of Yoga. As the mind of an aspirant is gradually purified by the holy impressions gathered through pilgrimage, good association, and a disciplined life, it begins to invoke the Cosmic Expansion of the Self. Therefore, Vishwamitra, literally meaning "Universal Friend," seeks the assistance of Rama for the destruction of demons.

King Dasharatha represents the ego-self. Sri Rama is the soul in the process of lifting the veil of ignorance and recognizing his identity as the Absolute Self or Brahman. Success in sacrifice refers to the attainment of Jivanmukti — liberation in life — by which one's life in the world becomes a part of the Cosmic Sacrifice of God.

In spiritual movement, the soul must be permitted by the ego to follow the dictates of the intuitive mind (Vishwamitra — Universal Friend or Universal Love). The teachings of Sage Vasistha reveal the wisdom of the Self, and enable the soul (Rama) to follow the dictates of Universal Love, and thus succeed in destroying the demons who are symbolic of the forces of ignorance: egoism, pride, hatred, and various aspects of darkness.

Section 8 - *Dasharatha is in Distress*

Having listened to the request of Sage *Vishwamitra*, King *Dasharatha* lost his wits and was confounded. He spoke in a pleading tone:

O Sage, *Sri Rama* is not yet sixteen years of age. I do not see that he is fit for fighting the terrible demons. I shall myself fight for you with my vast army.

Sri Rama is a mere child. He does not possess mighty weapons. He is not conversant in the science of war. He has been brought up in luxury in the midst of gardens and delightful pleasures of life.

Further, lately *Sri Rama* has been undergoing mental distress. He has grown weak and emaciated; he does not eat or drink properly.

Out of the various pleasures fit for a righteous king, I deem the best pleasure is that of having a son. It is only after intense austerity and expectation that I have been blessed with these four sons (*Rama*, *Lakshmana*, *Bharata* and *Shatrughna*).

O Sage, I cannot send *Rama* with you. He is tender in age, tender in body, and an unskilled fighter. Further, please tell me who the demons are with whom you require *Rama* to fight?

If they are *Ravana*, or his son *Meghanada*, or even *Marichi* and *Subahu*, I will not be able to render any help to you, because they are unconquerable demons.

Therefore, O *Vishwamitra*, knowing my inability to help you in this matter, please pardon me, and ask

no more for *Sri Rama* without whom I shall not live any longer.

This section depicts the concern of the ego as the soul tends to move on to its deeper identity as Cosmic Expansion. Ego is unable to understand the spiritual majesty of the soul and the Divine Grace inherent in the advent of Vishwamitra (Universal Love) that seeks Rama to destroy the demons of darkness. Though unwilling in the beginning, the ego must allow the soul to rise beyond all limitations of the mind. It must allow itself to be dissolved in the process of spiritual realization. Vishwamitra's anger in the following section is symbolic of the vitality of the soul when it allows its intention of Self-realization to be understood by the ego.

Section 9 — *Vishwamitra's Anger*

King *Dasharatha's* eyes were full of tears as he refused the request of *Vishwamitra*. At this, the Sage grew angry and said:

O King, it does not befit a King born in *Raghu's* line to render his words false. How is it that you are not able to keep your promise? I will go back as I came. May well betide you and your family, O *Dasharatha*.

As *Vishwamitra* grew angry within, the earth quaked, and the gods in the heavens were terrified, knowing not what might be the intention of the mighty Sage.

Then Sage *Vasistha*, in order to appease the anger of *Vishwamitra*, spoke: O King, you are endowed with excellent virtues and prosperous

conditions. It does not befit thee to relinquish your *Dharma*. It is by virtue of your *Dharma* alone that you are famous in the three worlds. If a king does not follow *Dharma* (righteousness), how can his subjects follow the same?

Remember how the mighty Kings of ancient times kept their words even at the risk of their lives. If you do not keep your word, you will be destroying your merits and the fruits of your virtuous actions. Therefore, please give *Sri Rama* to *Vishwamitra*.

Just as nectar is protected by the gods in the heavenly world, so *Sri Rama* will be protected by the might and power of Sage *Vishwamitra*.

Sri Vishwamitra is endowed with great skill in archery, and knows the use of all divine weapons. He had been a peerless warrior and a valiant king. No one can fight with him, whether he be god, *Kinnara*, or any being.

When *Vishwamitra* was practising austerity, the Divine *Rudra* (Lord *Shiva*) conferred on him the spirits of many powerful weapons. All these spirits serve him as bound slaves. Therefore, do not be afraid to allow *Sri Rama* to assist Sage *Vishwamitra* in the performance of his sacrifice.

*Study LORD RAMA AND HIS LILAS
by Swami Jyotir Maya Nanda

Section 10 — *Rama's Distressing Condition*

Hearing these words of Sage *Vasistha*, King *Dasharatha*, pleased at heart, asked his gatekeeper to bring *Sri Rama* in haste:

Let *Sri Rama* and *Lakshmana* be brought to assist the Sage!

The gatekeeper went to *Sri Rama's* palace and brought the following news about him:

O King, *Sri Rama* lives brooding over the vanity of objects. He is tormented by worries and anxieties, and his body has become very thin. He delights no more in the objects of the world. He utters words like, "These delights are painful, perishable and illusory." He is not attached to enjoyments. He is indifferent to all pleasures of the senses. *Sri Rama* remains in seclusion, away from society.

Thus, O King, we are pained at heart to see the condition of *Rama*. He laughs at worldly relations, prosperities, and education. He is disinterested in life, wealth, and kingdom. The pleasures of the world have become as bitter as poison for him.

Just as torrential rains are unable to pierce the impervious rocks, so the alluring temptations of the world are unable to distract the mind of *Rama*. *Sri Rama* once said as if surprised, "Alas, people cry and bewail over the miseries of the world, but they do not attain supreme dispassion. This is a great wonder!"

He laughs at the fleeting conditions of the world. The pleasures of the objects intensify attachment. Attachment is the cause of misery. Therefore, *Sri Rama* finds the whole world as an expansion of painful illusion.

Section 11 – *Sri Rama is Brought to Vishwamitra*

Having heard the condition of *Sri Rama*, the great Sage *Vishwamitra* said:

If such is the case of *Rama*, then bring him into my presence. Dispassion that dawns on the basis of discrimination, and the all-pervading pain that is experienced through wisdom will surely bring forth a glorious fruit.

Let *Sri Rama* be brought here. Even as wind drives away a brooding cloud from the top of a mountain, so shall I drive away *Rama's* delusion. With his delusion gone, *Sri Rama* will abide in his essential nature which is unlimited, peaceful, and supremely blissful.

Nourished by the nectar of wisdom, *Sri Rama* will become healthy, joyous, peaceful, and free from mental agony. He will perform his duties without hesitation and doubt.

I will teach him the wisdom pertaining to the Truth that underlies the apparent world-process, knowing which, *Sri Rama* will acquire balance of mind, and will look upon gold and clods of earth with an equal eye.

Then *Sri Rama* was brought into the presence of *Vishwamitra*. As he approached the royal court of *Dasharatha*, he shone like the moon showering delight in all hearts. His appearance was pleasing; his body had well-proportioned limbs. He was the very personification of divine virtues. Though young and strong, he was calm and serene. As he approached King *Dasharatha*, *Sri Rama* bowed his gracious head

at his father's lotus feet. Then he bowed at the feet of the Sages *Vasistha*, *Vishwamitra*, and others, as well as all the elders of the assembly, thus receiving blessings from them.

King *Dasharatha* showered his affection on *Rama* and said:

Oh *Rama*, how is it that delusion has entered your heart? Delusion is the breeder of miseries.

Then *Vasistha* said: Oh Prince, you are valiant; you have conquered the objects of the senses that are hard to conquer. But if you are so powerful and heroic, why are you caught in the meshes of anxiety and grief?

Sage *Vishwamitra* asked: Oh *Rama*, renounce the tremor of your eyes and tell me, what is the cause of your delusion? Just as rats burrow into the ground, so these worries have dug deep into your heart. What is troubling you? What desire do you entertain? Tell me how that desire can be fulfilled.

Tell me your desire, and it will be given to you. Then you will not suffer from mental agony any longer.

Hearing this, *Sri Rama* was as delighted as a peacock at the rumbling of the rain clouds.

Section 12 – *The Reason for Rama's Distress*

Thus asked, *Sri Rama* humbly replied:

Oh Sage, I have been brought up in the palace of King *Dasharatha*. As his dearest son, I grew up in the midst of affection and tenderness. I developed a

desire to visit pilgrimage centers. With the permission of my father, I visited the important *Teerthas* (pilgrimage centers), and purified my heart.

As purity of vision grew, I developed distaste for the objects of the world. My confidence in the objects was shaken. I found them to be snares spread before the *Jivas* (souls) to entrap and delude them, and thus, to lead them to hellish conditions.

The objects of the world, though existing outside, are nonetheless interlinked by the slender threads of desires. Just as animals are driven by instinct, so desires drive us to believe in the glittering values of the objects which, like mirage, elude the grasp of the seeker.

People continue to run after the mirage of pleasure, only to find themselves wandering on the burning sands with increasing thirst and fatigue. They become miserable, distressed, scorched and tormented.

Alas, it is desire itself that shines in the objects and lends value to them. Not knowing this, men rush to acquire them with feverish expectations, and then come to immense grief.

Though not literally sold, yet we are, as it were, sold and enslaved by the objects of the world. How long shall I lead this wretched life? As forest stags fall into caverns in the wilderness, and realize later their miserable predicament, so we have fallen into the ditch of the world-process; and we continue to move from one ditch to another.

Seeing this mighty storm of delusion shattering the mountains and trees of human existence, I find it a wonder that there is no one wise enough to devise a remedy for this calamity that has befallen all.

Just as a wildfire consumes hollow trees, so these wild desires consume our much adored bodied – perhaps not as visibly, yet more inevitably.

I weep not, lest the people around me follow me. But my very heart weeps; and before the tears slip from the core of my eyes, the fire of my heart evaporates them. Thus, no one sees the torments that I undergo silently.

We are snoring in the night of ignorance; and thieves are at work, contriving devices to steal away the precious wealth of *Atmic* vision. Yea, the thieves exist in the form of anger, hatred, greed, lust and the other vices of the lower self.

Who shall fight with these cruel robbers who steal away the pearls of *Atman*, and reduce us to a miserable plight, groping in darkness and delusion?

Section 13 – *Denunciation of Wealth*

Sri Rama continued: Wealth is fickle, intoxicating and ensnaring. It is the source of hell, sin and bondage. Wealth converts the mind of man into a muddy stream, boisterous with the waves of impure desires.

It robs man of his discriminative intelligence, leading him to intense misery.

A man who unawares places his feet on fire, finds no rest but jumps about limpingly. In the same way, wealth is ever restless, jumping about from one hand to another.

Flame proceeding from an oil lamp blackens the hand that touches it. In the same way, wealth blackens the fair virtues of the heart by creating conceit, selfishness, and hypocrisy.

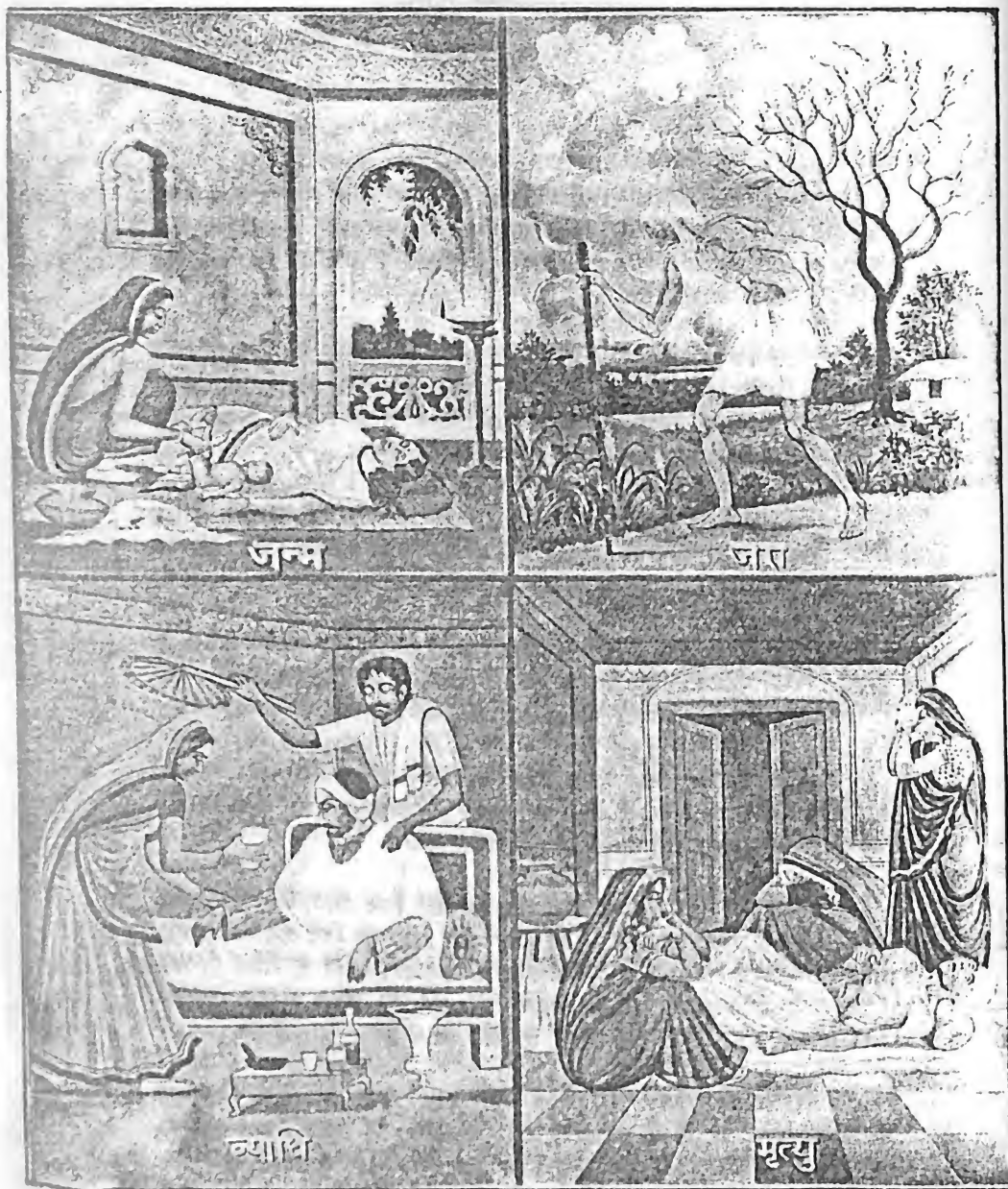
Wealth deludes the intellect even of those who are great and virtuous, and robs them of their precious qualities of nobility and culture.

These three men are rare: a wealthy man who is not criticized, a hero who does not brag of his heroism, and a ruler who has equal vision towards all.

Wealth, indeed, is the center of pain. It is the abode where dwell the mighty elephants of delusion who bring untold miseries upon man.

Wealth is like the dark night for the flourishing of good actions; but it is like the moon for awakening the lotuses of evil actions and desires. It is like frost for the creeper of dispassion. It is like dark night favoring the owls of lust, anger and greed.

Multicolored like a rainbow, it is devoid of substance. It is a master of deception and foul play. Having seduced the *Jivas* (souls), wealth leads them to repeated births and deaths, and to the manifold experiences of pain that life abounds with. Therefore, I detest wealth severely.



Four stages of life: Birth, old age, disease and death.

Courtesy Gita Press, Gorakhpur India.

Section 14 – *The Vanity of Life*

Life is as fickle as a dewdrop hanging at the tip of a leaf. It is like a mad person – it can leave the body according to its whims.

Those whose minds are poisoned by the venom of the serpents of objective pleasures live their lives only to experience numerous afflictions. They live in vain.

But those who have known what is to be known, who have found peace in *Brahman*, who are balanced in pleasure and pain, and in gain and loss, they truly live a life of perpetual joy.

We have taken this body to be the Self. But this physical life is like a lightning flash in the fleeting clouds of the world-process.

The air can be circumscribed, the sky can be broken to pieces, a wreath or garland can be prepared out of the dancing waves, but this life cannot be trusted.

Like a rent cloud in the winter sky, or a lamp with scanty oil, or like a wave about to decline, this life is fickle and insecure.

It may be possible to hold waves in one's hands, or touch the moon reflected in water, or grasp a lotus in the sky, but it is not possible to rely on this fickle life.

That life is indeed blessed which leads to Self-realization.

Trees live. Birds and animals live. But his life is

indeed meaningful and blessed who lives to destroy the subtle desires through the practice of meditation.

His birth is truly glorious who, having been born, attains the cessation of all birth and death. Others live as donkeys carrying their loads of Karma.

For the ignorant who mistake the impure body for the pure Self, the scriptures are a burden. To those who are attached to the pleasures of the senses, the knowledge of the scriptures appears like a burden. For men devoid of peace, the mind is a burden. For those who lack the knowledge of the Self, the body is a burden.

For those who lack the knowledge of the Self, beauty, life, mind, intellect, ego and all efforts become boring drudgery.

Just as a snake abides in the hollows of a tree, so disease abides in the body, feeding upon the very life of a person.

Just as a cat eagerly waits to devour a rat, so death waits to destroy the body.

Just as a glutton continues to devour food, so old age continues to feed upon this body, rendering it emaciated and infested with diseases.

Just as a person leaves evil company, so youth leaves the company of this perishable body in a short time.

Oh Sage, there is nothing as vile, mean and fickle as this life of ours when it lacks the knowledge of the immutability of the Self.

Section 15 – *Denunciation of Egoism*

In vain, egoism has emerged out of ignorance. I am terribly afraid of this dire malady. This egoism has created the numerous aspects of the world-process – birth, death, diverse experiences of pleasure and pain, and unceasing misery.

It is egoism which is the basis of all mental torments. It is this disease which promotes attachment towards the objects of the world.

Egoism has spread its snares in the form of the objects of the world. The human soul is caught in these snares. Egoism has spread a veil of illusion to enchant the minds of men.

Egoism destroys serenity. It is like frost, destroying the lotus blooms of Divine Virtues. It is like the winter season, dispersing the clouds of virtuous qualities.

Whatever is performed or enjoyed on the basis of egoism is vain. In the attainment of egolessness lies the true purpose of existence.

As long as the cloud of egoism continues to expand in the sky of the heart, so long cravings continue to flourish. But with the dispersal of egoism, the cravings disappear like a lightning flash, or like the extinction of flame in a lamp without oil.

O Sage, though I am free from my ego essentially, yet I am suffering from it. I am intent upon renouncing this egoism which is the enemy of every soul. This ignorance steals the precious pearls of Atmic knowledge. Please instruct me in the science of the Absolute, so that this taint of egoism can be effaced from the shining Self, and I may rest in the essential nature of *Brahman*.

Section 16 - *Denunciation of the Mind*

Sri Rama continued: This mind is very fickle and unstable, like the glittering feather of a peacock fluttering in the wind.

This restless mind continues to wander among the petty objects of the world, even like a street dog, devoid of discriminative intelligence.

A basket made up of straw remains ever empty, even though water is poured constantly into it. In the same way, the mind continues to be empty in spite of the experiences of diverse pleasures of the senses.

Like a forlorn deer that has wandered away from its herd and fallen into a pit, this mind has wandered away from the Self, has fallen into the pit of the world-process, and is now fettered by various desires for the world.

Just as the boisterous ocean does not come to rest, so too this mind finds no rest. It is as turbulent as the milky ocean was when it was first churned, except that it yields no nectarine happiness.

The Puranas present a mystic story about the churning of the milky ocean. The milky ocean was churned by Gods and Demons, and various preclous materials were recovered. Nectar was the central purpose for churning the ocean. This milky ocean represents the purified mind. Churning is the process of meditation. Gods and Demons are the forces of Sattwa (purity) and Rajas (activity). Its treasures are the spiritual values of life. Nectar is Self-realization.

I am unable to control this great ocean of mind which is filled with the whirlpools of worldly desires and is inhabited by the whales of deception.

This mind continues to wander like a deer, grazing upon the petty pleasures of the world, unaware of the impending doom of hellish conditions.

Like a lion imprisoned in a cage, this mind is fettered by its own desires. It does not find rest even for a single moment.

The mind has stolen equal vision from the soul. It has sustained the illusion that this body itself is the conscious soul.

The intrinsic movement of the mind towards the Self is lulled to sleep on the bed of attachment to the objects of the world. Without the awakening caused by scriptures and Sages, this mind cannot be awakened.

This *Chitta* (the mind) is like a bird trapped in the net woven by erroneous thoughts such as: "This is mine. This is myself. This object will give me happiness."

The fires of worries and anxieties are constantly consuming the forest of the mind.

A male dog following a female dog goes to a rotting carcass and feeds upon it with great pleasure. In the same way, this *Chitta* (the mind) follows its vile cravings (*Trishna*) and is delighted with the perishable pleasures of the world.

Just as a storm raises a dust cloud, so this mind has raised the dust cloud of attachment and infatuation through the storm of its restless desires.

A pitcher tied to a rope is constantly drawn up and down the well. In the same way, the mind tied to the rope of desire is led to heaven and hell, birth and death, and high and low states due to its Karmas.

O Sage, this mind is hotter than fire, more inaccessible than a mountain, and more invulnerable than a thunderbolt. It is difficult to conquer even through immense effort.

Like a vulture that falls upon rotting carcasses, this mind is constantly falling upon the pleasures of the world.

Oh Sage, I think that it is possible to drink the ocean, it is possible to cross over the *Sumeru* mountains, or to devour fire, but I do not see how it is possible to control this turbulent mind.

The mind is the basis for perceiving all the objects of the world. It is the basis of the world-process. Without curing this mind, it is impossible to attain freedom from the afflictions of the world.

This mind will continue to cause the growth of afflictions, just as forests grow in the mountain valleys. Therefore, it is my resolve to destroy this mind in order to attain freedom from the world-process.

Section 17 — *Denunciation of Craving*

Just as the rays of the sun render the earth hard and dry, so the burning rays of worry have robbed me of my goodness and gentleness.

The forest of my *Chitta* (mind) is pervaded by the darkness of illusion. It is devoid of the power of enquiry and reflection. The evil spirit of craving continues to sport in this forest with great enthusiasm.

It is craving that keeps the mind agitated. This craving has caused a dense delusion to exist in my mind. This craving creates desires for earthly wealth and possessions.

Craving drives the mind from one object to another. It leads one to false speech and evil actions. This stream of inauspicious craving continues to flow in my personality.

Though I want to control the distractions of the mind, yet this craving obstructs my meditative movement and directs my mind to the petty objects of the world.

Rats often cut the strings of Veenas (a musical instrument). In the same way, cravings continue to destroy the strings of Divine Virtues.

Just as a leaf continues to whirl in a whirlpool, a straw continues to drift with the wind, and the wintry clouds continue to wander in the vast sky, so am I caught in the revolving wheel of craving.

When a bird is caught in a net, and is unable to go back to its nest, it stays pacified. In the same way, I am caught in the revolving wheel of craving.

I am so consumed by the fires of craving that I deem even nectar insufficient to cool this burning affliction.

The mare of craving continues to wander far and near, and runs in circles.

Just as oxen tied to a rope are forced to carry heavy burdens, so human beings, tied to the rope of craving, carry heavy loads of Karmas.

Though I am a hero, yet this dark night of craving continues to frighten me. Though I am endowed with the vision of discrimination, yet this craving is threatening me with intense misery.

This craving pierces the hearts of men. It creates the entanglements of the world-process. It is the promoter of inauspiciousness. It is like a black demoness — the very embodiment of poverty and pain.

Craving bites a person like a serpent, and fills his body with a deadly venom.

Section 18 — *Denunciation of the Body*

Sri Rama continued: O Sage, I am disgusted with this body. It is the source of all worldly afflictions. It is the support of craving, desire, disease, egoism, and repeated birth and death.

This body consists of blood, flesh, marrow, bone and ugly entrails. It is the very seat of all misery. Though it is inert, yet it appears to be alive and conscious. It is neither purely spirit, nor purely material.

This body is very fickle in its character. It is delighted with petty food and drink. It is affected by little changes in the weather. What could be as base and low as the body? It is devoid of any divine quality and is the basis of all grief.

This body is like a tree. Its two arms are the branches. Its shoulders are the trunks. The eyes are the hollows, and the head is a large fruit. The teeth seem to perch upon this tree like birds. The ears appear like woodpeckers. Hands and feet are the leaves. Diseases entwine this tree of the physical body.

Beauty is the shade of this tree, which draws the travelling souls into a process of embodiment. This body is neither a friend nor a foe to anyone. No one is really related to this physical body. Therefore, it is vain either to love this body or to hate it.

The soul takes recourse to the boat of this body again and again to cross the ocean of the world-process. Just as a boat must be left aside, so too this body must be transcended when the ocean is crossed.

In this mysterious forest of physical existence, who can live with security and peace? The soul abides in this body like a cat in an empty drum.

On this tree of the physical body, the mind continues to play its restless pranks like a monkey. Worries are the flowers that bloom on this tree. Great miseries infest this tree like infectious disease germs. Craving abides in its hollows even like a deadly snake. Virtue and vice are the sweet and bitter fruits of this tree. Youth is the transient shade that the tree provides for the travelling souls through the desert of the world-process.

The spirit of desire (*Kama*) abides on this tree. The vulture of ego rests on its branches, desirous of locating rotting carcasses. Numerous subtle desires

emanate from this tree like secondary roots and intertwine to form strong ropes which are difficult to destroy.

This body, possessed by its householder, ego, does not delight me. What purpose does it serve, whether it is alive or dead? The senses are like pet animals in the possession of the ego. Craving is the housewife who continues to assert herself in every part of this house. *Kama*, the spirit of desire, has painted this house in attractive colors. But this body does not please me.

This body is supported by the various functions of the *Chitta* (Mind). Ignorance and falsehood are the supporting pillars for this physical mansion. Multiple miseries, like unruly children, continue to keep this body filled with their cries and shrieks. Sleep is the bedroom, lulling the soul in ignorance. The impure intellect is the maid who abides in this house, suffering from the leprosy of evil actions.

O Sage, this body is filled with impressions of the numerous objects of the world. It is crowded and disorderly. Ignorance has spread a thick veil of dust in every part of this physical house. Therefore, it cannot be desired by me.

Seated within this body, the intellect, like a housewife, continues to look through the windows of the senses and entertains herself along with her numerous daughters in the form of worries and griefs. Such a body is not coveted by me.

At the door of the mouth, the tongue appears as a restless she-monkey always craving for objects to taste.

Mind, like a rat, has burrowed holes in the body, rendering it weak and sickly. This body is the abode of diseases, and is the fountainhead of afflictions.

An elephant caught in a bog cannot be saved by a weak person. In the same way, I am unable to save my soul from this marshy existence of the body.

This body is interested in everything that is perishable. What have I to do with kingdom, with prosperity, and with the fulfillment of worldly desires? All these are perishable and fleeting.

What beauty is there in this body which does not follow the soul at the time of death, but like an ungrateful wretch, deserts its own friend and master?

This body is subject to age and death. Whether one is prosperous or poor, his body must follow the same rule. No amount of external achievement can make the body secure upon this earth. Therefore, I see no gain in maintaining this physical body.

This body is constantly being consumed by the fire of worry; therefore it is called *Deha* (that which burns). After death, it is cremated or destroyed. But the wise Sages burn this body with the fire of knowledge.

Whence does this body come? Where does it go? This is difficult to understand. The ways of the body are like those of the wind, flame, and mind. Their movements are mysterious.

I am not related to this body. This body is not my Self. I am not this body. This body is not mine. He who has attained peace of mind by developing this wisdom is indeed best among men.

The demoness of craving has thrown me into the ditch of physical embodiment. She has robbed me of all my spiritual treasures. This craving has deceived my helpless intellect.

There is nothing in the world that can be considered real and imperishable. This body is of this world. How can there be reality and permanency in this physical body? Alas, people are cheated by this illusory body.

Within a short time, this body becomes old, and like dewdrops falling from leaves, it falls and dies. This body is sustained by ignorance. I do not condone this body even for a single moment.

Those who see durability in the lightning flashes, or in the wintry clouds which are bereft of rain, or in the castles of the mind, they may continue to believe that this body is permanent and durable. But I cannot place my trust in this perishable body. I deem this body as worthless as a straw.

Section 19 – *Denunciation of the Childhood Stage*

Sri Rama continued: O Sage, it is difficult to acquire human existence. Having acquired human embodiment, childhood is spent in misery and pain. A child is helpless. He is subject to manifold miseries. He is unable to communicate with others. Most of the time, he is dull-witted. His mind is constantly desirous of fun and frolic. When he is unable to acquire the petty objects of his desire, he enters into a state of profound humiliation of spirit. All these defects abound in the childhood stage of the human embodiment.

Like a fettered elephant, the soul is tied to this childhood stage. A child cries and weeps for no apparent reason. He is constantly dependent upon others. He acts like birds and beasts in the forest. In fact, this childhood stage of life is filled with misery.

The mind of a child is extremely distracted. It is filled with petty desires. It undergoes intense sufferings when the desired objects are not realized. Therefore, this childhood stage is painful.

A child is constantly afraid of water, fire, and wind. He is subject to unknown accidents at every step. He involves himself in harmful sports and painful affairs, but his mind is unable to understand his errors. Just as owls remain hidden during the day, so the impurities and the defects of the mind remain hidden during the childhood stage.

Those who consider the childhood period of life as desirable and enjoyable are devoid of reason and sense. The mind of a child is constantly restless, as if it were on a swing. The mind is ten times more restless during childhood than at any other stage in life.

Even like a street dog, a child is tempted by a piece of food. He is easily irritated. He is easily persuaded to follow a suggestion. He even enjoys filth. He is easily upset. His face is like the earth during rains — muddy with tears and dirt.

A child is subject to reprimands and beatings from his elders. His sentiments are very tender. Therefore, he encounters more painful conditions than pleasant ones. A child is easily cheated. The mother says to the child that she would give him the very moon as a toy, and the child extends his hand to catch the moon. Such is the folly of a child.

A child is unable to experience heat and cold in a normal way. When suffering from the variations of temperature, he is unable to save himself from the painful condition. A child is no better than a tree or a herbal plant.

The childhood days are filled with fear arising due to the elders, parents, and grown-up boys. How can I find anything desirable in a child? The period of childhood abounds with ignorance and lack of discrimination. Therefore, O Sage, I am desirous of renouncing the possibility of becoming a child again. I am desirous of attaining Self-realization.

Section 20 — *The Evils of Youth*

Sri Rama continued: O Sage, the stage of childhood fades with the advent of the youthful stage. Youth is the seat of manifold deeds that are evil and sinful. The innocence of childhood is no more. Instead, the mind of a young person enters into the complexities of attachment and hatred and moves from grief to grief.

The mind becomes affected by desire, greed and anger — the three gates to hell. One who is not affected by this stage of youth is indeed invincible.

The period of youth is like a lightning flash in the dark clouds of human existence. It is short-lived. Its flashes of joy are devoured by the thunder of cravings and the rain of sorrow. Therefore, I do not cherish this youth that abounds with the thundering threats of inauspiciousness.

The pleasures of youth are sweet in the beginning but are bitter in their consequences. Ridden with youthfulness, one becomes drunk, as it were, with wine. Though false, this youthfulness seems real. It is deceptive, like the pleasures of a dream.

Youth seems pleasant in the absence of rational enquiry and philosophical reflection. Dominated by youthfulness, the mind is devoid of purity and simplicity. It is fickle and frivolous, maddened by passion.

A young man commits acts of violence and cruelty due to the pride of youth. He sows the seeds of sorrow to be harvested during old age.

When the night of passion darkens in the firmament of one's heart, it is difficult to behold the moon of discrimination; the gentle light of wisdom is fully obscured.

Just as a forest fire burns trees in abundance, so the fire of passion continues to consume the forest of the human mind. And just as rains bring water to the lakes and rivers and render the paths muddy and impure, in the same way, youth pollutes human sentiments and renders one's thoughts impure.

It is easier to cross a river with tumultuous waves than to cross the restless mind of youth, filled with the waves of cravings.

The mind of a person is enchanted by the beauty of the opposite sex. Overpowered by passion, it sees beauty in a perishable body. Overcome by ignorance, it expects abiding happiness from an illusory pleasure.

Youth is like a forest. One's numerous relationships such as wife, sons, friends and dear relatives are like trees. All the grieving sighs constitute the wind that blows through this forest. The serpents of pain abide in the hollows of the trees. The mind is the basis of this forest.

Youth is like a storm that raises a dust cloud of *Rajas* (the principle of passion) and obscures the impressions of good deeds in the form of good association, the study of scriptures and practice of reflection and meditation.

Youth awakens the defects of the mind and strikes at the root of virtues. It abounds with sinfulness. Just as the moon causes a black bee to be enfolded by the enchantment of a lotus, so too youth causes the intellect to be enchanted and bound to egoism.

In the desert of the body, youth is a mirage. Human mind, like a deer, continues to run after this mirage, and it becomes trapped by falling into the pits of sense-enjoyments.

Just as wealth flees from the hand of an unfortunate person, so too this youth, like a bird, flies away in a short time. In the night of youth, the evil spirits of attachment, hatred and other manifold maladies of the mind continue to roam and sport.

A person who is proud of this short-lived youth is like a dull-witted animal. He becomes attached to youth only eventually to cause regret and sorrow.

They are adorable and great souls who have crossed the period of youth without falling from the ideals of non-violence, truthfulness, non-covetousness, and purity.

O Sage, it is rare to find a youth endowed with humility, as peaceful as the hermitage of a saint, and adorned with the qualities of the soul.

Thus, I do not see any virtue in the period of youth, and therefore, I want to rise above its allurements. I do not wish to be caught in this baneful predicament.

Section 21 – Denunciation of Sex and Passion

Sri Rama continued: I do not see anything enchanting in the physical body of the opposite sex. This physical body is like a vehicle or a chariot for the soul. There is nothing tangible in it.

This physical body is constituted of skin, flesh, blood, bones, marrow, and different limbs. If any part of the body is analyzed, it will lose its beauty and enchantment. Is there physical beauty beyond the skin?

What is a female's body but a conglomeration of hair, blood, fat, bone and marrow? How can a man endowed with discriminative knowledge run after it?

This body that is adorned again and again with fragrant materials, special oils, and beautifying treatments becomes the foul food of vultures, jackals, and other carnivorous animals after its death.

It is the lack of discriminative knowledge that impels the human mind to run after the pleasures of sex. It is passion that lends enchantment to the human body which is devoid of beauty and charm.

A passion-ridden mind becomes intoxicated at the perspective of physical pleasures. Passion intoxicates the mind even as alcoholic drinks.

An intoxicated elephant can be fettered to a post and subjected to various cruel treatments, and

yet it won't be able to come to its senses. In the same way, though subjected to numerous afflictions, the mind of a person is unable to give up its intoxicating passion for sex.

Fire is pleasing to behold from a distance, but it is fatal when one embraces it. Even so, the pleasures of sex are delightful from a distance, but are detrimental when the human mind becomes involved in them.

The subtle desires of the mind give rise to a perception of charm and beauty in the physical body of another person. When the screen of subtle desires is lifted, it is easy to understand that passion for the physical body is nothing but dry wood used to kindle the fires of hell.

Passion robs one of one's health and mental peace. It is a snare spread by *Kama* (desire) to trap the soul of man in the net of the world-process.

Like a captured elephant, this human mind, fettered with the formidable chains of passion, continues to remain helpless. The immense strength and majesty of the mind are brought to a state of utter degradation.

Just as the stable is a place of bondage for a horse, and the fastening post is the same for an elephant, so too the physical body of the opposite sex is a place of bondage for a person.

The body that was once so dearly loved now lies in the cremation grounds (or in a grave), devoid of the loving attention that it had received from its loved ones during life. It decays, rots, and is eaten up by animals.

What is there in this physical body? It is composed of the five elements. It is material in nature. How can this body be of interest to the God-ward mind of a Sage?

Passionate desire, like a thorny bush, grows in the ignorance-ridden mind of man. It gives rise to the branches of dense entanglement and the bitter fruits of numerous miseries. This thorny bush continues to grow into gigantic proportions.

The people in the *Vindhya* Mountains lure male elephants into their traps by placing female elephants inside them. In the same way, the mind is lured by passion to become trapped in the numerous entanglements of the world-process.

Where there is passion, there is desire for pleasure. Where there is desire for pleasure, there is the world-process. When passion is renounced, the world-process is renounced. When the world-process is renounced, there arises the experience of the Bliss of the Self.

Human pleasures are as fickle as the fluttering wings of a butterfly. I am afraid of the repeated experiences of birth, growth, old age and death during numerous embodiments. I will therefore direct my mind towards the attainment of Self-realization, renouncing passion and the allurements of sex.

Section 22 – *Denunciation of Old Age*

Just as frost destroys lotuses, a storm carries away the dewdrops hanging on the leaves, and a river in flood roots out the trees on its banks, so too old age comes to consume the body.

A poisonous tablet distorts the body of a person in a short time. In the same way, this old age comes to distort and deform one's body.

When this body is deformed and rendered weak by age, it does not hold out any attraction for passion or sex. It is ridiculed by the young.

When old age takes possession of a person, his intellect runs away, even as a woman driven away by a jealous, false mother-in-law.

An old person is ridiculed by all his near and dear relatives. His servants and sons, his friends and relations, and even his wife — all begin to look down upon him.

Just as a vulture takes possession of an old tree, so too this old age takes possession of a body.

Craving (*Trishna*), which is the basis of all misery, which abounds with humiliation, and which is a source of great torment to human heart, continues to grow in old age.

An old person develops many humiliating sentiments. "Who am I? What should I do? Should I stay quiet and avoid troubles? How should I perform any work?" These sentiments torment the heart of an old person.

"How can I receive tasty food from the relatives? How can I receive their attention?" These worries continue to burn like fire in the heart of the old.



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First the crane of old age perches upon the tree of the body, and finds it infested with the snakes of diverse diseases; and then the owl of death comes rushing to destroy it, as if from nowhere.

Just as evening is followed by increasing darkness, so too, old age is followed by the increasing darkness of weakness and death.

Seeing this body laden with frosty whiteness, death comes like a monkey desirous of destroying it. A city without inhabitants is not as desolate as a body in old age. Even a famine-stricken country is not as dry and dreary as one's life in old age.

A vulture utters harsh notes when he wants to eat a carcass. So too, old age seems to send forth its harsh notes in the form of asthma, cough, and other diseases announcing their intention to consume this body.

Just as a child takes hold of the head of a lotus and plucks it out of fun, so too, old age takes hold of the head of a person by turning his hair grey and then destroys the physical body.

First the cat of old age devours the rat of youth. Then it becomes intent upon devouring the body itself. At this stage, the cruelty of this cat knows no bounds.

There is nothing more inauspicious in this world than this she-jackal in the form of old age that howls in the forest of life. Like a burning log of wood, this old age continues to give forth the sounds of sighs, coughs, and lamentable cries.

Even those who were great heroes in the battlefield are overpowered by old age. There is no one who is not defeated by this demoness – this old age.

When the chill of old age overpowers this house of the physical body, the children in the form of the senses are unable to move about, being numbed with cold.

Old age with its tottering legs appears like a dancing woman who performs a joyous dance to the tune of the crackling of bones and coughing sounds from the throat.

Thus, reflecting upon the limitations of old age, I do not desire to enter into the world of recurring birth and death. I wish to attain the termination of all miseries through Self-realization.

Section 23 – *Denunciation of Time*

In this world of essenceless objects, Time, like a rat, continues to destroy the networks of human expectations. It is folly to desire any object of this world that is dominated by Time.

There is no object that is not destroyed by Time. There is no condition that is not devoured by Time. Time consumes numerous worlds.

Though unseen, Time continues to express itself through Age, Year, Month, Day, Hour and Minute. Time continues to overpower the whole world.

Great and glorious men have been devoured by Time, as snakes are devoured by a Garuda bird. This

Time is very cruel, stone-hearted, and miserly. There is nothing in the world which will not be devoured by Time.

A magician creates various objects by his magic, and then destroys them. In the same way, this Time continues to dance in the form of the world-process, creating diverse conditions and destroying them.

Just as a parrot pecks into a pomegranate and eats its inner contents, so Time continues to eat the contents of this cosmos — all objects and living beings.

This Time, like a mad elephant having tusks in the form of good and evil, continues to trumpet in this world for the destruction of all that has been created.

This world-process, which is sustained by the substratum of *Brahman*, is pervaded by Time. Every object or condition is born, allowed to grow and decay in and through the movements of Time.

There is none as cruel as Time, none as greedy as Time, none as fickle and inauspicious as Time. Just as children play with their balls in the courtyard, so this Time plays with the balls of sun and moon in the courtyard of the vast blue sky.

Time, with his consort, Destiny (based on the Karmic fructifications of the individual souls), continues to dance for the purpose of sport and amusement. Thousands of ages pass by, but this Time is unaffected. It neither rejoices nor grieves; it neither rises nor sets.

Time continues to sweep this creation with the ancient broom of dark night, like a greedy person who continues to collect gold from the golden sands. Time is never satisfied with its repeated sweeping over the world-process.

This Time is so greedy, that claspng the very sun as a lamp in its fingers of activity, it continues to seek out every object under the sun to appease its hunger.

Time, using the sun as its eye, and day and night as its eyelids, continues to discover objects that are ripe for destruction.

This cruel Time sacrifices the four-horned sheep of the world-process at the altar of the sky. And it continues to lick the drops of blood that are scattered in the form of shining stars. Mountain, Ocean, the Sky and the Earth - these are the four horns of the sheep of the world-process.

This Time is the destroyer of youth and life. Its mysterious movements are beyond the reach of human reason. It assumes positive and pleasing aspects in accordance with the fructification of good Karmas. It gives rise to negative conditions when evil Karmas fructify in a person. Time is dominating the whole world. It is the mightiest of all creation.

Oh Sage, I want to attain that Self where Time is transcended and endless freedom is realized.



Dance of the Time Spirit

Section 24 — *The Transitoriness of the World*

This world is a sporting ground for an evil Prince, the Time-Spirit (*Kala*) and his terrible consort, the Spirit of Darkness (*Kala Ratri*). Numerous creatures exist to entertain this Prince during his dreadful dance.

The surging waters of deluge exist as a pleasure pond for the Prince. This dismal pond is further beautified by lotuses in the form of submarine fires of destruction.

Even mighty personalites that roar like lions are reduced to the condition of a frightened bird that must inevitably become a prey to the hawk of Time.

This Time-Spirit is constantly flinging darts of sorrow on all sides, while his dreadful bow of death bends with the thundering claps of destruction.

This earth with its surging oceans and numerous creatures is just a bowl of wine dressed and flavored with various spices for the amusement of Time.

Section 25 — *The Dance of the Time-Spirit*

No one has seen this Time-Spirit, yet he continues to destroy all creatures. Just as the burning rays of the sun melt the icy summits of the mountains, so this Time-Spirit continues to destroy all.

The world is the dancing-ground of Time who assumes the role of destiny and death to perform diverse forms of dreadful dances.

This Time-Spirit is intensely infatuated with his consort, Destiny. As Time dances, human beings are led to experience the fructifications of their Karmas.

With the sun and moon as bracelets, the blue sky as his garment decked with stars, and the deluge clouds as his skirts, this Time-Spirit continues to dance unceasingly.

The Goddess of Destiny joins her lord in his terrible dance. She wears skulls for a garland, and her feet are planted in hellish regions. The hell-fires form the trinkets on her feet. She dances and reels at the mere gaze of her husband, while the mountains crack and crash at the sound of her feet.

Like a child making sandcastles by the seashore, this Time-Spirit continues to create worlds inhabited by different creatures, complete with mountains and oceans, and established with different cultural patterns, only to dissolve them again for a new creation.

Section 26 – *The Evils of Perishability*

We are like deer caught in the enchanting devices of this trapper, Time. We are like slaves sold to the spirit of Destiny.

This Time-Spirit is ever involved in appeasing its insatiable hunger. It hurls people into the world-process which abounds with adversities.

Just as a snake swallows air, so this cruel Time takes and devours youthfulness from the body, rendering it aged and old. It is the embodiment of cruelty.

In this world, there is no one who is endowed with a perfect form of prosperity. Every attainment by a mortal being is perishable and petty. The objects of enjoyment are hideous in their inner depths. They give rise to endless miseries.

Life is fickle. Death lurks to devour it. Youth is fleeting. Childhood is veiled by delusion.

Bound by the ropes of attachments, people are tied to various relationships. The enjoyments of the world are expressions of the great disease of ignorance. The desires for pleasure are like mirages scintillating in the burning desert.

The senses are one's enemies. The self-effulgent *Brahman* (the Absolute) is veiled by ignorance. Mind enchains the soul. By false identification, the mind becomes the basis of painful experiences.

Egoism taints the taintless soul. The thought-waves of the mind are distracted and restless. The intellect is devoid of spiritual insight into the nature of the Self. The senses are directed towards the pleasures of the world.

No one is happy in his heart. The clouds of misery have overcast the firmament of the mind. The disease of attachment continues to flourish day by day. The ability to glimpse the Self has been obscured by the dust clouds of *Rajas* (the principle of activity). The darkness of *Tamas* (the principle of obscurity and ignorance) is increasing. Life is very unstable. Yet the hankering for perishable objects continues to increase in the minds of men.

Youth is fleeting. Good association, which could end the painful experiences of life, is not adopted. People are not inclined to the pursuit of Truth. Their hearts are veiled by delusion. They do not feel joyous at the happiness of others. The shining virtue of compassion has fled from their hearts. Evil-mindedness is increasing day by day.

Evil association is available at every step. Good association is very rare. The desires do not dissolve even when the desired objects have perished. Death continues to drive flocks of people to the regions of the unknown. Even the directions shrink, the oceans dry up, the mountains are brought to dust. How can I develop faith in the steadiness of life?

Even mighty personalities are destroyed by God. Even the "immortal" gods perish. How then, can I trust my fleeting life?

That Time devours *Indra* — the King of Gods. It destroys the God of Death himself. It destroys the sun and the moon. So how can I hope for my continued existence?

He alone is happy whose intellect is devoted to the good of others, and is enlightened by wisdom. But those who are overpowered by ignorance continue to perish as the wheel of Time goes on revolving.



Section 27 – *Denunciation of All Objects that Obstruct Self-realization*

In the absence of reason and reflection, the objects of the world appear enchanting. There is nothing in this vast world that can promote peace and satisfaction in the mind.

Childhood is spent in various sports. There is no possibility for the mind to acquire peace and stillness. Then with the advent of youth, the mind, like a deer, is caught by the trap of passion. Old age renders the body dilapidated. Thus, the mind is never at rest in this vain expansion of human life.

The lotus of the body withers away as the frost of old age overpowers it. The bee of Prana (vital energy) leaves the body, and the stream of the world dries up for the departing soul.

Ripening in time, this body is relished by death. All objects of the world must change and perish in course of time.

The impetuous stream of craving flows on in this world. It continues to devour numerous objects, rooting out the trees of contentment that grow by its banks. Craving knows no fulfillment or satisfaction.

This boat of the physical body is on the verge of sinking in the ocean of the world-process. The five senses are like whales which aid the sinking of the boat. Seated in this boat, the soul is without rest or peace.

Desire grows in the human heart like a mighty tree entwined by the creeper of craving. The mind continues to wander on its branches like a fickle monkey, with increasing discontent and restlessness.

O Sage, those great men are rare who are unaffected by adversities, who are not deluded by the apparent charms of the world, whose minds are free from egoism, and whose hearts are untainted by the evil of passion.

When I consider true heroism, even the perspective of attaining victory over an ocean of inimical soldiers does not seem to be heroic. I consider him a true hero who can cross this ocean of the world-process by conquering the senses, and destroying the root enemy, ignorance.

No action of man can bring about the destruction of ignorance. I do not see the acquisition of peace through the performance of various actions. Even the fruits of righteous actions are perishable.

Those great men who fill this earth with their glory, who pervade the directions by their valor, and fulfill the needs of the needy; those who are endowed with endurance, humility, generosity and are blessed with prosperity, are difficult to find. (But even such conditions of prosperity gained by meritorious works must perish.)

During the fructification of good Karmas, prosperous conditions rush to a person, as if from nowhere. In the same way, during the fructification of evil Karmas, adversities fall on him like lightning flashes from the open sky.

It is due to delusion that a human being continues to cherish his perishable relationships in the form of sons, wife, and wealth as the basis for happiness. With the advent of death, these loving relationships exist in vain. They work as poison by creating painful impressions in the mind.

That gain is true gain which, having been attained, is not lost again. But that which is gained only to be lost, is an illusion of which the mind must beware. The objects of the world are like baits waiting to entangle the fish of the soul.

The mind of a person is constantly involved in thoughts such as these: "This work must be performed now. That work must be completed in the future. I should not have done a particular work in the past." All this involvement is in vain. All these works are directed towards the attainment of the perishable pleasures of the world.

Like old leaves falling from a tree, and new leaves taking their place, the souls continue to leave old bodies in order to reincarnate in new ones. Those who lack wisdom must continue to revolve in the cycle of birth and death.

Alas, only the dull-witted can find rest in this perishable world without working for the true purpose of their existence through the service of Sages and Saints. They are able to enter a joyous sleep due to their intense ignorance. But how can a reflective person rest in peace without serving the true cause of his existence?

A person has hardly removed the impediments to pleasure from his way and has hardly encountered a shower of prosperity, when he sees Death waiting at his door for the termination of his life.

Like waves rising and falling in the vast ocean, so people are born to die, and die to be reborn. The waves rise and fall endlessly, and we do not know why.

Thousands of people gather at a fair or at a pilgrimage place, but eventually they must separate from each other. In the same way, this world is an accidental gathering of souls at a passing fair.

Like lamps that go out when they use up their oil, so are human lives — kindled by the flame of desire, and subsisting on the oil of attachments. There is nothing substantial in this evanescent world.

Just as a tree that once offered cooling shade and nectarine fruits is cruelly cut down by the axes of the woodcutters, so too the life of a man, in spite of his gracious acts and benevolent qualities, is cut down by the cruel axe of death.

The development of attachment towards loved ones is like coming in contact with a poisonous tree. Though pleasing in the beginning, the poison continues to affect the very bloodstream of a person, causing him to faint and to die in course of time.

There is no aspect of the world which is not defective. There is no direction that is not caught in the fire of misery. There is no being that is not subject to death. There is no action that is not tinged with evil.

This world of "enjoyment" is sustained by a series of modifications. All trees are nothing but wood. All human bodies are nothing but flesh and blood. All objects are modifications of Maya (cosmic illusion). There is nothing substantial or real in this world.

The five basic elements go to evolve diverse objects of pleasure for the ignorance-ridden minds of men. There is nothing unique in this world.

Veiled by the illusion of attachments, the mind of a person is unable to understand the nature of the Divine Self. How can he constantly meditate upon the Self?

Engrossed in grazing upon green grass, a goat accidentally falls from a high peak to his ruin. In the same way, engrossed in the pursuit of the objects of desire, human beings fall into the depths of misery and grief.

Most people are like trees growing in dark pits. Their leaves, flowers, fruits and shade are confined to a limited area. Others are not benefited by their existence. Growing within the confines of their selfish mind, they exercise their talents, wealth, and resources for their own egoistic satisfaction. Thus, they are unable to develop knowledge, humility, and other spiritual qualities.

In this dream-like world, men who are attached to perishable objects are seen everywhere. But those who are endowed with discrimination and dispassion are rarely found.

Section 28 – *The Transient Nature Of All Sense Enjoyments*

All this visible world, consisting of conscious and inert objects, is transient, like a conference held in a dream.

Today where there is an ocean with unfathomable depths, tomorrow there will arise a mountain kissing the sky.

Today the physical body of a person is being adorned with silken clothes, beautiful ornaments and lovely cosmetics; tomorrow it will lie desolate in the cremation grounds.

Today where there is a thriving city with numerous inhabitants involved in diverse activities, tomorrow there will exist a barren desert.

Today there is a person who is immensely powerful, who is a majestic ruler; tomorrow he will be reduced to dust.

Today there is a green forest abounding with trees, creepers, herbs and silvery streams; tomorrow it will be converted into a busy city with thousands of people.

Childhood, youth, body, properties and possessions — all these are transitory. Like waves rising and falling in the ocean, so do these come and go in this world-process.

As fickle as the flame of a lamp buffeted by the wind, so is this life — like the flashing of lightning from the dark clouds.

This world-process is like an actress assuming different roles and playing different parts. She continues to weave a web of magic as she dances. Her eyes are fickle like flashes of lightning. She has veiled the Truth of *Brahman* by her enchantments of names and forms.

O Sage, there were great men experiencing great prosperities and achievements, performing great sacrifices and majestic deeds. Where are they now? They dwell only in our memories. In the same way, we too will pass away, leaving behind our memories.

This world is being destroyed every day. It is being created every day as well. This unending process of creation and destruction continues always.

Individual souls continue to embody in different forms as men, animals, trees, or heavenly gods and perfected beings. There is nothing steady or immutable in this world.

All beings, whether dwelling in higher celestial planes or in grosser planes of existence, are like dry logs of wood to be consumed by the fire of time.

With death waiting at one's door, all one's possessions, prosperities, near and dear relatives, friends and glorious attainments appear vain and essenceless.

The objects appear charming only as long as the mind is not acquainted with the transitory nature of all things in the world.

In a moment a man of immense wealth is converted into a pauper. In a moment a person of radiant health becomes a helpless patient suffering from a debilitating disease. The world continues to change like the colors of a chameleon.

At times the sky is overcast with dark clouds. At times it is filled with the milky whiteness of the full moon. At times it resounds with the sound of thunder. At times there is a reign of serenity. At times the stars adorn the blue expansion of the sky. At times it is lit up with the rays of the sun. Even like the changing conditions of the sky, this world is a transitory process.

Within moments a person encounters adversities. Within moments he is blessed with unexpected prosperities. Within moments a person is overcome by death. Within moments his soul enters into another embodiment. Is there anything in this world which is not momentary and transient?

Human personality is constantly overcome by birth, death, hunger, thirst, childhood, youth and old age. Like alternating days and nights, prosperity and adversity continue to visit a person one after another.

A strong person is often destroyed by a weak person. At times even a very unworthy person rises to great heights of fame and prosperity. At times even great persons are devoid of any external forms of success and prosperity.

Hardly have the childhood days of simplicity been enjoyed when there emerges youth with its multicolored illusions. Hardly have the youthful days been experienced when there advances old age with increasing debility and mental weakness. Even in this body there is no steadiness. How can we expect steadiness from other things of the world?

The mind is happy at times, at times filled with depressing thoughts; at times dull and distracted, at other times serene and joyous; at times filled with dispassion, at times involved in worldly pleasures. Within a moment it becomes cheerful, and within a moment it sinks into dejection. Even mental states are transient and short-lived.

People grow like corn to be cooked and eaten up by the Creator who continues the process of creation and destruction with an unrelenting succession.

Neither adversity nor prosperity is abiding in this world. All is transitory and short-lived. This Time-Spirit continues to change the things of the world with ruthless vehemence.

Like fruits that fall from trees, people continue to fall day by day into the gaping jaws of death, shaken by the wind of time.

Section 29 – *The Essencelessness of All Objects*

The perception of pain in the world is like a forest-fire that has consumed my mind. Just as a mirage is impossible in a lake, so too the mirage of worldly enjoyments cannot manifest in the lake of my mind.

Just as a *Nim* tree continues to become more and more bitter as it grows and matures, so the world is becoming increasingly bitter as time passes on.

This world grows like a thorny *Karanja* bush. *Dharma* (righteousness) continues to decline; *Adharma* (unrighteousness) is increasing day by day. Goodness wanes while evil waxes.

The ethical standards are being broken by the ascendance of unrighteousness. I deem seclusion far better than a life immersed in royal enjoyments envenomed with mental grief.

A garden redolent with flowers does not delight my heart. The perspectives of sex and wealth do not gladden my spirit. I desire to possess a mind that is quiescent and peaceful.

O adorable Sage, this world is devoid of happiness. It is perishable. Craving continues to well with a piercing intensity. The mind continues to stay fickle and restless. To expect peace from this world is ridiculous. I am ever immersed in the thought of attaining freedom from all cravings through Liberation.

I do not welcome death. I do not welcome life either. I want to attain that lofty state wherein I can become free from the fevers of the world-process.

What have I to do with kingdom? What purpose can these fleeting enjoyments serve for me? What can I gain through wealth? It is the ego-sense that lends values to all these. In me this ego-sense is dead.

It is difficult to detach the senses from sense-objects. The individual soul is tied to the cycle of birth and death through the knotted rope of attachment.

Just as an elephant tramples upon a soft flower, so the momentum of passion crushes the tender blooms of the mind. If this mind is not treated during youth, how can it be treated when the disease of the world-process is allowed to intensify during old age?

¶ Sense-objects are worse than poison. A poisonous substance kills the body once, but attachment to the sense-objects continues to kill this body from one embodiment to another.

Pleasure, pain, friend, relative, life and death — all these cause bondage in the mind of an ignorant person. A man of enlightenment is not overcome by these. Therefore, O Crest Jewel of the Wise, please instruct me with that wisdom which will free me from grief, fear and misery.

Ignorance is like a terrible forest. The subtle desires for the objects of the world are like traps spread by the hunter, Death. Its highlands and lowlands, its pleasures and pains, are covered with the thorns of miseries. I aspire to be released from this forest.

Blinded by the taint of ignorance, my mind trembles like the flame of a lamp buffeted by gusts of wind. It is ever involved in removing that which is undesirable, and acquiring that which is desirable.

Craving is like a subtle thread that has pierced the minds of people, and has woven them into a garland.

Just as a vigilant lion breaks loose from its fetters — that is how I want to break down the fetters of anger, hatred, and other evils with the force of wisdom acquired from your teachings!

There is no mental problem which cannot be dissolved by good association with a wise person. There is no darkness which cannot be dispelled by the sun.

Section 30 — *Request for Spiritual Instructions*

Seeing the beings of the earth fallen into the dark pit of the world-process, my mind staggers; my heart is frightened; every limb of my body is trembling like leaves on an old tree.

My intellect, like a child who has lost its mother, fortitude, is constantly afraid in this world-process.

Just as deer, driven by greed for insignificant grass, fall into ditches, so the thought-waves of the

mind, driven by the vain desire for the illusory pleasures of the world, fall into pits of mental distractions, and experience immense pain.

The senses of a worldly man are directed towards the objects of the world. They are not inclined to the Absolute Reality, *Brahman*. Thus, the senses in a man are unable to help him out of the pit of the world-process.

Worry continues to abide with the soul like a faithful wife. It continues to abide in the heart of a person at all times.

My intellect is like a tree in the winter season. It has shed the leaves of worldly thoughts due to the frost of discriminative vision. But it still harbors a subtle taste for the objects through *Vasanas* (subtle subconscious desires).

What is that vision with which the Sages and Liberated Beings live and move in this world?

These transitory enjoyments of the objects are like poisonous snakes. How can they be useful and auspicious for the soul?

How can this lake of intellect be purified when it is constantly being whipped up by the elephant of infatuation, and is filled with the mud and aquatic growth of passion and desire?

What is that method by which a person can live in the world like a lotus flower untouched by the water of the lake?

How does a person attain the lofty heights of wisdom and develop a vision that sees the world as a straw, and thus, live without being touched by anger, hatred, lust, greed and other mental weaknesses?

Who are those great personalities who have crossed this world-process? Whose lives can we meditate upon and emulate, and thus, become free from grief?

What is that Liberation which is indestructible? O Sage, please instruct me about the nature of the Self so that I might gain an insight into the mystery of this creation.

O great Sage, please adopt any method to remove the impurities of my heart so that the moon of bliss may manifest deep within me.

What is desirable in this world? What is undesirable? What is neither desirable nor undesirable? How can this restless mind assume the stability of a mountain?

How can this epidemic, this chronic disease, this world-process which gives rise to numerous afflictions, be controlled and cured?

When will the bliss of Self manifest in the firmament of my heart? O Lord, you are the best among the Knowers of *Brahman*. You are the highest among the men of goodness. Please impart to me that instruction which will enable me to attain fullness of perfection, and thus, eradicate grief from my consciousness!

Section 31: *Spiritual Questions*

O Sage, the life in the world is like dewdrops hanging high from the restless leaves of a tree. The physical body is as fickle as the croaking of frogs during the rainy season. The relationships with friends and family members are like thorny bushes nourished by the rains of the world-process.

Subtle desires blow as the eastern wind, causing the clouds of Karmas to gather in the firmament of the heart. Desires and hopes flash like lightning and roar like thunder, only to be ushered into a dark frustration. As the clouds rain down in torrents, greed dances like a peacock, and the buds of evil bloom. And Death, like a fiendish cat, waits to pounce upon human life as if it were a helpless rat.

What should a person do to shelter himself from the torrential rain of the world-process? Who must be invoked? From whom should one seek refuge? What course should one adopt so that this forest of life will not abound with inauspicious miseries?

This world is filled with sorrows. There is no substance in this transient world-process. How can ignorance be destroyed in order to find the substance behind the illusory names and forms of the world?

How can the dreary forest of the world be converted into the heavenly gardens of spring by the advent of knowledge? How can the full moon of contentment be made to rise in the firmament of the heart, thus bathing the world with the nectarine vision of the Self?

How should the mind be rendered pure so that the Moon of Bliss may flood it with its nectarine light of wisdom?

Whose example should one emulate in life in order to be free from all worldly attachments, and attain liberation?

What should a person do in order to render himself immune to the evil influences of afflictions and the illusory enjoyments of the world?

How can a person stay unaffected by the fires of the world-process?

Just as fish cannot live without water, so no one can exist without being involved in the activities of the world. How can a person perform his day to day duties without being caught in the net of attachment and hatred?

The mind continues to maintain its existence by contacting the objects of the world. When it becomes detached from the objects of the senses, it becomes nonexistent. It merges in the Self.

It is by acquiring that wisdom which negates all the objects of the world that a person can become free from the mind. Please, continue to instruct me until the world-effacing wisdom has dawned in my consciousness.

Please instruct me so that even though performing actions in the world, I will be free from all miseries of life.

Please tell me the stories of great men, highlighting the manner in which they freed themselves from the illusions of the world.

If I do not learn the method of overcoming the miseries of life, I would rather fast unto death than live such a dreary existence.

If I do not find the right approach and the solutions of life's basic problems, I will not take food or water. I will not perform the functions of day to day life such as clothing, bathing, giving gifts, and attending to the various needs of human existence. I will stay silent like a painted picture.

I shall abandon this body. This body is not mine. It does not belong to me. I am not even related to this body which is the basis of manifold illusions. I am not associated with anything in the world. I will enter into absolute silence of the spirit by extinguishing the flame of desire.

Thus, having spoken with a voice like that of a peacock before the clouds of wisdom represented by the presence of Sage *Vasistha*, *Sri Rama* became silent, with wistful eyes, eager to listen to the nectarine teachings of his Guru.



Section 32 – *Sri Rama is Praised by the Siddhas*

After expounding the transitoriness of the world and the vanity of the objects, *Sri Rama* resumed his silence. His words, filled with the fire of spiritual aspiration, sent a thrill through everyone who was present at the royal court of King *Dasharatha*.

Apart from the general subjects, there were among the listeners great personalities such as Sage *Vasistha*, Sage *Vishwamitra*, *Narada*, *Vyasa*, many celestial beings, and the counsellors and ministers of King *Dasharatha*.

The *Siddhas* were heard saying, "From the beginning of creation we have been roaming throughout this vast universe, but it is today that our ears have been fulfilled by listening to the nectarine words of *Sri Rama*. His wisdom and *Vairagya* (dispassion) have shown clearly that abiding happiness cannot be found even in the heavenly regions."

Section 33 – *Sri Rama Is Praised by the Sages*

The Sages who listened to the profound words of *Sri Rama* expressed their views in humility:

It is a great wonder that *Sri Ramachandra* has uttered such words of profound wisdom. His expressions are devoid of the fickle sentimentality of the mind. His wisdom pertaining to the essencelessness of the world has destroyed all cravings and has given Supreme Contentment.

Oh Prince *Rama*, you have developed a subtle intellect which, like a luscious tree, is adorned with the flowers and leaves of reflection and rationality, and is laden with the fruits of *Viveka* (discriminative understanding) and *Vairagya* (dispassion).

He alone is called a 'man' who has the light of spiritual aspiration burning in his heart. Others are not fit to be called a 'man.' They are nothing but animals revolving in the wheel of birth and death, driven by attachment, infatuation and ignorance.

It is rare to find the clarity of vision which *Sri Rama* possesses. Rare are the aspirants who seek the Self as the only goal of their existence.

Just as moonlight emanates from the moon, and fragrance from a flower, so this glorious wisdom has proceeded from *Sri Rama*.

They are blessed who endeavor to realize the essential Self through their existence in this world of illusory objects and perishable pleasures. Let us, therefore, enlighten *Rama* regarding the nature of the Self. *Sri Rama* is the fittest recipient of wisdom; let him attain spiritual realization of the Self.

Thus concludes *Vairagya Prakarana* (the chapter dealing with dispassion) in *Yoga Vasistha*.



MUMUKSHU VYAVAHARA PRAKARANA

Section 1 – *Sri Shuka Goes to King Janaka*

After listening to the words of dispassion expressed by *Sri Ramachandra*, great Sage *Vishwamitra*, delighted to find such an excellent aspirant, responded saying: Oh *Ramachandra*, you are the best among the wise. There is nothing more to be known by you. Your intellect has gained enough subtlety to acquire spiritual wisdom. However, you hold a tinge of diffidence that clouds the mirror of your mind. Just as *Sri Shukadeva*, the son of Sage *Vyasa*, attained spiritual knowledge, so will you attain Self-realization.

Sri Ramachandra asked: How did the son of great *Vyasa* attain peace through the instructions of his Guru? Why was he unable to discover the Truth of his existence by his innate wisdom?

Sri Vishwamitra said: I will tell you the story of *Sri Shukadeva*. This Sage *Vyasa*, who now appears like a mountain of black unguent seated by the side of the royal throne of your father, King *Dasharatha*, had a son known as *Shukadeva*. Even at an early age, *Shudakeva* developed dispassion towards the world, just like yourself, Oh *Ramachandra*.



Sage Shuka and King Janaka

By the force of constant reflection on the nature of the world, this mind became filled with *Viveka* (discriminative knowledge). But still he was unable to find rest in the Self. He was diffident with reference to his own wisdom. Therefore, he did not experience peace within himself.

One day he approached his father, Sage *Vyasa*, and asked with great humility and devotion, "O Adorable One, how does this world arise? How vast are the dimensions of this universe? How long will it continue to exist? Does this world-process belong to the body, or to the mind, or to the senses, or to the *Pranas*? Or does this world belong to the Immutable Self?"

Sri Vyasa explained the nature of the Self and of the universe in every detail; but *Sri Shukadeva* felt that he had already known all that teaching himself, and therefore, that there was nothing more to receive from his father. His inward diffidence was not expelled.

Seeing this, Sage *Vyasa* instructed *Shuka* to go to King *Janaka* to receive spiritual wisdom. Royal Sage *Janaka* was well-known for his lofty attainment of spiritual enlightenment. At this, *Sri Shuka* went to the palace of King *Janaka*, and informed the latter of his arrival through a gatekeeper.

King *Janaka* knew that *Sri Shukadeva* had rejected the teachings of his father due to lack of confidence in his own wisdom. Therefore, any direct teaching given to him would not be effective. Thus reflecting, King *Janaka* ignored his message. *Sri Shukadeva* had to wait for seven days at the gate of the palace before receiving an audience with the King.

After seven days of patient waiting, *Sri Shukadeva* was brought into the royal palace. There he was entertained by various enjoyments of the world. But just as a soft breeze is unable to root out mighty trees that are deeply rooted, so the luxuries of the royal palace were unable to agitate the mind of *Sri Shukadeva*.

Having proven that he was worthy of receiving spiritual wisdom, the devoted and respectful *Sri Shukadeva* was brought before the King. King *Janaka* said, "You are blessed, Oh *Shukadeva*. You have attained the goal of all forms of self-effort. All enjoyments of the world are like straw before the Bliss of the Self. You have fulfilled all your desires by the force of Self-realization. What more do you expect?"

Sri Shukadeva said, "O Adorable Guru, how does this world arise, and how can it be eradicated from one's consciousness?"

Thus questioned, King *Janaka* gave the same instructions which *Sri Shukadeva* had received from his father, Sage *Vyasa*.

Sri Shuka expressed himself, "O Guru, I had discovered this same truth by the force of my reflections. The same was taught by my father, Sage *Vyasa*. And you have instructed me in the same reality. All scriptures are in accord with the same Truth.

"In brief, this world arises from the mind, and it is destroyed by the cessation of the mind. Therefore, it is essenceless and illusory. I need to receive confirmation of this truth through your enlightening instructions."

King *Janaka* said, "Surely there is no other truth than what you have discovered by your reflective enquiry. This world is essentially the Divine Self which is all-pervading, non-dual, pure consciousness.

"The Supreme Self has fallen into the bondage of the world-process through its own *Samkalpas* (mental thoughts). When it becomes freed from the *Samkalpas*, it attains the state of Liberation and freedom.

"You are the best among the aspirants. You have known the highest Truth of existence. You have developed dispassion towards all objects of the world. Though still very young, you have become detached from the enjoyments of the world. Your father, *Sri Vyasa*, is the ocean of wisdom; but your wisdom excels even your father's. I deem myself highly privileged to be your Guru."

Thus instructed by King *Janaka*, *Sri Shukadeva* became free from inner diffidence. He became fully enlightened. All grief, restlessness and agitation vanished from his mind. Surrounded by gods, *Sri Shuka* entered into *Samadhi* (superconsciousness) on the heights of the *Meru* Mountains. After enjoying *Samadhi* for ten thousand years, he passed on into *Videha Mukti* (disembodied Liberation).

With the destruction of worldly attachment and its cause, Ignorance, *Sri Shukadeva* merged himself in the Absolute Reality (*Brahman*), even as a drop of water merges itself in the vast ocean.

**Section 2 – Sage Vishwamitra Requests
Sage Vasistha to Instruct Sri Ramachandra**

Having related the story of *Sri Shukadeva* and the manner in which he attained enlightenment, Sage *Vishwamitra* said to Sage *Vasishtha*: “Oh Great Sage, *Sri Rama* needs to be instructed. You must remove the taints of his mind in the same way as the Royal Sage *Janaka* instructed the highly advanced aspirant (*Sri Shuka*).”

Turning to *Sri Rama*, Sage *Vishwamitra* said: “When the enjoyments of the world appear as diseases that must be cured and remedied, it is a sure indication that wisdom has dawned, removing the misty twilight, and awakening its own Self-effulgent revelation.

“The fetters of the world-process are strengthened by the intensification of the subtle desires for the enjoyments of the world. But when these subtle desires are weakened and effaced, the world-process loses its capacity to enchain the soul.

“Oh *Rama*, the destruction of *Vasanas* (subtle desires) is called *Moksha* (Liberation) by the wise Seers. To the extent that these *Vasanas* are attenuated or thinned out, one experiences increasing freedom and fulfillment.”

Turning to the Sages, *Vishwamitra*, continued: “Oh Sages, when an aspirant is endowed with supreme dispassion, his ignorance is dispelled by the mere act of listening to the instructions from an enlightened Sage. It is difficult to find an aspirant with such an intense form of dispassion as has been expressed by *Sri Rama*.

“Just as vines do not grow in a desert, so spiritual knowledge does not grow in a mind that is overpowered by the impressions of attachment and passion. *Sri Rama* has attained *Vairagya* by the force of his reflections. He needs to listen to the teachings of *Vedanta* from the lips of his Guru.

“One’s face reflects clearly in a mirror that is wiped clean of all dust particles. In the same way, the Divine Self reflects clearly in the purified mirror of a mind that has been freed from the dust particles of worldly desires.

“When a spiritual teacher who is beyond attachments, and devoid of fear and anger gives instructions to a qualified aspirant, the latter acquires the knowledge of the Self in a short time, and becomes established in *Brahman*. Therefore, let Sage *Vasistha*, the family preceptor of *Rama*, teach him the art of spiritual enlightenment.”

At this, *Sri Vasistha* said, “I welcome the loving command of Sage *Vishwamitra* with exceeding joy. I will dispel the darkness of *Sri Rama*’s mind with the lamp of spiritual wisdom.

“I will expound the teachings that I received from Lord *Brahma* on the *Nishadha* Mountains during the early days of creation.” (*The wisdom that Sage Vasistha planned to present before Rama proceeded from the Cosmic Mind*).

Section 3 — *The Nature of the World-process in the Three Periods of Time*

Sri Vasistha said: I will impart that wisdom which I have received from the Divine Creator, *Brahma*, for the cessation of the miseries of the world.

Attracted by this grand proposition, **Sri Rama** asked: Oh Sage, before you begin to expound the wisdom that you received from *Brahma*, please remove this doubt from my mind. How is it that the son of *Vyasa* — **Sri Shuka** — attained disembodied Liberation, while *Sri Vyasa* continues to be in his physical body?

Sri Rama wanted to understand whether Liberation demanded termination of physical existence or not. Since this physical body is an effect of ignorance, how can one reconcile the existence of the physical body when ignorance is destroyed? At the same time, if liberated Sages were to vanish from the earth, how could the continuity of the scriptural teachings be possible?

Sri Vasistha comprehended the profundity of **Sri Rama's** question, and explained the nature of the world in order to enlighten him regarding the possibility of Self-realization even in life.

Sri Vasistha said: The Self illumines this world just as the sun illumines the earth. Numerous dust particles scintillate in a single ray of the sun. Much in the same way, numerous universes scintillate like dust particles in a single ray of the Self.

Who can count the dust particles? In the same way, who can count the millions and millions of universes that are illumined by the Light of the Self?

These universes are refractions of Consciousness caused by the mind conditioned by subtle desires. Therefore, they do not exist spread out in real time and space. They are experienced in the heart of the *Jiva* (individual soul). When one dies, he perceives his astral experiences within his own heart; and within his very heart he perceives himself reborn in a different setup of the world-process.

Thus, one follows the course of movement determined by his Karma (actions) and *Upasana* (devout meditations). Millions have died in the past, millions are dying now, and millions will die in the future.

Different forms of world-processes are experienced by every soul due to the presence of *Vasanas* (subtle desires) in the depths of the heart (unconscious mind). This world does not exist independent of the mind conditioned by subtle desires. Therefore, all perceptions of realities in things existing in the world of time and space are illusory.

The *Vasanas* contain the possibility of numerous embodiments. Just as a plantain stem contains many layers, so *Vasanas* hold layer upon layer of different embodiments.

Only wisdom can remove the *Vasanas*. With the removal of *Vasanas*, the world is realized as *Brahman*, the Absolute. Therefore, it is not the physical extinction of the body, but the enlightening wisdom which bestows Liberation on a soul.

In the vast ocean of the Supreme Reality of the Absolute, the worlds arise like waves and ripples.

Some waves seem to be identical, some similar, some totally different. All these possibilities are present because the Self is unbounded and infinite.

All the Sages here have embodied many times in different forms. You, Oh *Rama*, have also incarnated many times to relieve the burden of the earth, to destroy demoniac forces, and to promote the victory of divine forces.

A liberated Sage, though possessing a body, is not affected by the world. His inner vision, having negated the reality of the world, recognizes the Awareness of Non-dual *Brahman* even as a wave would recognize the reality of the stupendous ocean.

It is the veil of ignorance that causes fickleness and distraction in the mind, and deludes the soul into becoming identified with the perishable physical body. It is ignorance that causes restless cravings and grief in the human mind. Therefore, when ignorance is destroyed by knowledge, a Sage experiences freedom from restlessness; he experiences infinite satisfaction and supreme Bliss.

Section 4 – *The Glory of Self-effort*

Sri Vasistha continued: O Gentle *Rama*, the ocean is the same, whether with rolling waves or with calm placidity. In the same way, the experience of Liberation is the same whether in a *Jivan Mukta* (liberated in life, sustaining the waves of practical reality) or in a *Videha Mukta* (liberated without the body).

A liberated Sage does not enjoy the objects of the world with a sense of egoistic involvement. He does not feel, "I am the enjoyer. I am enjoying this object." Therefore, he rises beyond the awareness of the relative realities of the world.

Therefore, O *Rama*, listen to the illuminating instructions that are designed to dispel the darkness of ignorance. A well-sustained self-effort leads to success in every field of life. Wherever one encounters failure, it is due to lack of self-effort.

True self-effort consists of those actions of body, speech and mind that render the unconscious (*Chitta*) pure, and thereby lead to the revelation of the moon of Spiritual Bliss beyond the dark clouds of mental impurities. The Goal of self-effort is the attainment of Self-realization.

Reliance on destiny is an expression of weak will and confused mind. Who has seen destiny performing actions without human self-effort? Whoever accomplishes anything in this world does so due to the result of his sustained self-effort. Destiny, therefore, exists as a figment of imagination in a diseased mind.

If one performs actions (whether vocal, physical or mental) that are enjoined by the scriptures and the Sages, then it is right self-effort. He is bound to succeed in attaining Self-realization.

Sustained self-effort leads to the gradual unravelling of the Goal of Self-realization. One's self-effort must be characterized by unbroken

continuity, perseverance and patience. One must not give up his self-effort because of obstacles. While gathering momentum of will, he will be able to overthrow all that comes in his way by the force of this sustained self-effort.

All greatness and glory in the universe has been attained due to self-effort. It is by the force of self-effort that a soul rose to *Indrahood* and became the ruler of the three worlds. It is by the force of self-effort that a soul rose to the grandeur of *Bhagavan Vishnu* and became the sustainer of the entire universe.

It is by the force of self-effort that a soul attained the lofty state of *Shiva*, who adorns his forehead with the moon and wears a garland of snakes.

Self-effort has two aspects: the self-effort of past lives, and the self-effort of the present life. Of the two, the self-effort of the present life has the capacity to overthrow the Karmic process caused by past self-effort.

Those who persevere with self-effort and are endowed with endurance and wisdom, attain the glorious state of a God who reigns supreme during the period of Cosmic Deluge. They can swallow up the *Meru* Mountains and destroy the entire creation. Is it difficult, then, for them to destroy the Karmas of the past?

Self-effort that is governed by the wisdom and the insight of the scriptures leads one to success. But effort that is not in accord with the scriptures produces evil results.

When a sustained self-effort in accord with the scriptures is relaxed, there begins to grow the forest of attachment and hatred in the unconscious, rendering a person unsuccessful, afflicted with poverty, and subject to the humiliating conditions of disease, debility and bondage. Overcome by these humiliating conditions, the soul, having lost its infinite resources, begs even for drops of the petty enjoyments of this transient world.

But when right self-effort is sustained, one rises to that lofty state of consciousness wherein even the perspective of ruling the vast earth abounding with prosperity is considered insignificant compared to the glory of Self-realization.



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Section 5 – *The Power of Self-effort*

Sri Vasistha continued: Just as the light of the sun manifests the various colors, in the same way, the self-effort of a person manifests the various developments in human life.

Self-effort is of two types: 1. in accordance with the scriptures, and 2. contrary to scriptural injunctions. That which is in accordance with the scriptures enables one to integrate one's personality and evolve on the path to Self-realization. That which is contrary to scriptural injunctions leads one to the world of delusion, bondage, and hellish conditions.

The self-effort of the past and the self-effort of the present fight with each other like battling rams, and whichever is the stronger of the two triumphs. Therefore, even when one has not succeeded in one's effort, he should not discredit the power of self-effort. It is the self-effort of his past that has asserted itself.

Therefore, an aspirant must take recourse to good association and perform self-effort in accordance with the scriptures in order to overcome the obstructive Karmas of the past.

Even the obstructions presented by gods are due to the negative Karmas of the past. When the positive Karmas are strengthened, all obstructions are overcome.

Let a person perform his self-effort with all his strength – with gritting teeth and clenched fists. Let him not surrender to the past self-effort performed in

previous births. The present self-effort has the potentiality to conquer all past efforts.

One's effort must be maintained until the past negative Karma is overpowered. The virtues of this life are bound to overcome the vices of the past lives. Therefore, one must cultivate serenity, self-control, reflection and meditation by his self-effort.

A man devoid of self-effort is worse than a slothful donkey. Having faith in the Divine Self as his inner reality, he must gird up his loins to attain Liberation through Self-realization.

Just as a lion emerges out of a cage by breaking it, so one must release oneself from the fetters of the world-process by the force of self-effort.

An aspirant should consider his body perishable. He should not act like an animal devoid of reason. He should pursue the conduct of great men and Sages.

He should not waste his youthful energy in tasting the disgusting pleasures of the senses, like vermin revelling in the pus of a blistered sore. Rather, he should take recourse to self-effort for attaining Self-realization.

One who ignores his present ability for self-effort and is frightened by his past, might as well be frightened by his own arms, thinking that they are two dangling snakes.

And if one says that he is led by destiny, then his blackened countenance is abhorred by the Goddess of Prosperity. *Lakshmi* (the Goddess of Prosperity) turns away from anyone who relies on destiny.

All great men attained success through their self-effort. Reliance on destiny is an expression of ignorance, and is the main cause of failure.

True self-effort joins with good association and is guided by scriptural wisdom. Such self-effort gives its result in a short time. But self-effort devoid of insight and wisdom leads to negative developments.

Men who were once sunk in the worst conditions of adversity and poverty have risen to the heights of gods by the virtue of their self-effort.

Self-effort must be sustained from a very early age in order that it may be powerful and intensive. A self-effort that has been adopted without sustained perseverance, in a sporadic manner, is like a tender thorn that cannot be used to remove a hard thorn from one's body. In other words, such self-effort is unable to gather enough strength to overthrow the Karmas of the past.

If this inauspicious laziness did not exist in this world, who would not have attained success and supreme bliss? It is the lack of promptness caused by dullness and by the habit of mental procrastination which deprives one of success and achievement.

Due to dullness and laziness, this world teems with human beings who are nothing but miserable animals driven by the instinctive urges of life.

After one has overcome childish fickleness, he must study Yoga under the guidance of a Guru. He must discover the faults of his personality and endeavor to remove them in order to attain Self-realization. This is the perspective of self-effort. It is a process leading to Self-realization.

Section 6 – *The Negation of Destiny*

Sri Vasistha continued: There is no destiny other than self-effort. The self-effort of past lives becomes the destiny of the present life. The intellect that believes that “I am dependent upon destiny,” must be cured of its misunderstanding by the practice of good association and study of scriptures.

Every development in life is backed up by one’s self-effort of the past. There is no basic difference between destiny and self-effort.

Just as a person cries out in pain, so one cries out saying, “Alas! It is my destiny,” merely for sentimental relief. From a rational point of view, each individual himself is the author of every condition that he encounters.

Just as a strong man can beat up a weak one, so a stronger form of self-effort will conquer the operations of a weaker self-effort. The evils of yesterday can be remedied by the good actions of today. There is no need to rely on destiny.

In cases where one does not succeed in one’s self-effort, one should not develop faith in destiny. One should rather realize that his past self-effort was more intense than his present self-effort. Therefore, even the apparent experience of defeat sings the glory of one’s own self-effort.

Those who do not even try to conquer the obstructive Karmas of their past lives and are dependent upon the false concept of destiny are dull-witted and ignorant.

When a person is unable to succeed in a particular endeavor, he consoles himself by asserting the supremacy of destiny. But this form of thinking is based upon ignorance. It must be shunned by the wise.

Even when a person is glorified by society for no apparent reason, one must realize that it was that person's past self-effort that led him to his present accidental glory. Waiting for some accidental development on the basis of the fictitious operations of destiny is a great folly indeed.

Therefore, it is important to render the self-effort of this life more powerful than the self-effort of the past. And that self-effort which is sustained by a mind devoid of agitation is bound to be victorious at all times. The past cannot hold its supremacy over the present.

When wealth that has been earned with great difficulty is lost due to a more intense negative self-effort in the past, one should not yield to vain grief. Rather, one should endeavor once again to enrich oneself. The same attitude must be adopted in every field of life. One must try again and again, until the goal is reached.

One must gain an insight into the proper time, the proper place, and the proper course of action in order to attain a particular objective in life. Every development in the world is conditioned by time, space, means, and material resources. A man of self-effort must gain an insight into these in order to render his self-effort purposeful and effective.

One must not grieve over the impossible. If one were to say, "One day, I will be destroyed by death; therefore, what use is there for any self-effort?" then his intellect is faulty. He must endeavor to acquire that which will enable him to attain spiritual progress in his life. His self-effort must be directed by a healthy reason.

Surrender to God does not consist of believing in destiny. The idea that, "God is the inspirer of man towards virtue and vice, so what can he do by his own will?" is backed up by ignorance. God is the indwelling reality in man. Therefore, when one adopts the path of self-effort by renouncing his dependence on a fictitious destiny, he is able to draw upon the infinite resources of the Divine Self within him.

It is self-effort that draws the Grace of God. One who lives a life of dullness cannot claim to have the radiant virtue of divine surrender.

True self-effort is that which promotes joy and removes pain. The path leading to Self-realization enables one to attain infinite bliss and absolute cessation of pain. Therefore, one's self-effort must be directed towards the attainment of Self-realization.

All one's actions must be directed towards the attainment of Self-realization. In this movement, one should not allow his mind to be colored by the currents of attachment and hatred. A balanced mind with one-pointed vision towards the Goal of Self-realization is characteristic of true self-effort.

The defects of yesterday are remedied by the efforts of today. Sometimes the evils of yesterday are transformed into a process of goodness by one's self-effort of today.

When a person develops aspiration for Self-realization, and therefore takes recourse to association with wise Sages, study of scriptures, and performance of good deeds in order to better meditate upon the Divine Self, he is performing true self-effort.

The essence of self-effort lies in releasing the Self from the illusions of egoistic vision, and relieving It from the burden of Karmas founded on ignorance.

Destiny cannot obstruct the movement of an heroic aspirant who has determined to discover his own essential nature by proper self-effort. Having thus understood, one must endeavor to cure oneself of the disease of the world-process.

The world abounds with numerous activities. It is natural to encounter success and failure at different occasions in one's life. One must not allow his mind to be tossed by attachment and hatred. He must continue to perform self-effort for crossing the ocean of the world-process.

If such effort is in accordance with the scriptures, it is indeed the true form of *Purushartha* (self-effort). That effort must be sustained in all conditions. This leads to the cessation of pain and attainment of Supreme Bliss.

Physical activity must be directed towards the service of Guru and association with the Sages. The intellect must be directed towards the removal of ignorance from the depths of one's heart. This is the true end of one's self-effort.

An advanced soul continues to maintain his self-effort from one life to another. Due to his good Karmas, a person enjoys celestial joys after his death. He is then born with a treasure of good Karmas which enable him to advance rapidly on the path of spirituality. If you call this his destiny, we are not opposed to this. We oppose the mistaken notion of destiny which is sustained by the ignorant in order to turn away from their self-effort.

When a person develops intense aspiration for purifying his *Chitta* (heart), and endeavors to practise listening, reflection and meditation under the guidance of his Guru, he is performing the best form of self-effort. He is bound to conquer destiny by developing the excellent qualities of serenity, self-control and spiritual aspiration.

Section 7 — Predominance of Self-effort

Oh *Rama*, having developed a healthy mind in a healthy body, one must devote one's life to the cherished goal of Divine Realization in order to terminate the possibility of recurring birth and death.

Whoever wills to overcome destiny by his self-effort attains fulfillment of all his desires, whether they are of this world or of the world hereafter.

But those who use fictitious destiny as an excuse for turning away from their self-effort kill their very Self. They fail in all four aspects of self-effort: *Dharma* (ethical fulfillment), *Artha* (material security), *Kama* (vital pleasure), and *Moksha* (the Infinite Bliss of the Self).

Self-effort in a person expresses in these basic forms: *Samvit Spanda* — the vibration of consciousness, *Manah Spanda* — the vibration of mind and *Indriya Spanda* — the vibration of the senses.

It is the vibration of consciousness that urges an aspirant to develop a strong resolve to attain Self-realization. Thus, *Samvit Spanda* is the basis for the *Manah Spanda* in a person. When the mind begins to vibrate in a particular manner, the senses are led to function accordingly. Thus, *Manah Spanda* results in *Indriya Spanda*. With the vibration of the senses, there arise various activities in one's physical personality.

The process of self-effort embraces every part of the individual — the innermost spirit, his intellect, mind, senses, and body.

The Witnessing Consciousness develops an awareness of the objective world due to its ignorance. It is like a serene lake developing an awareness of the reflected scenes of nature. As a result of this limited knowledge, the mind is projected by the Self, and is set into motion. Mental vibrations are accompanied by the vibrations of the senses. The mind is an extension of consciousness. The senses are an extension of the mind. The world is an extension of the senses. The underlying theme in one's self-effort is to realize the essential glory of the Self untainted by the reflections of the world-process.

The mental aspect of self-effort predominates during meditation. While chanting *Mantras* and offering praises to the Deity, vocal effort gains predominance over other forms of effort. During travel, physical effort gains supremacy over mental and vocal efforts. Thus, men are led to success by adopting different forms of self-effort. Destiny is nothing but a myth.

It is by the virtue of self-effort that *Brihaspatt* became the preceptor of Gods, and *Sukracharya* became the teacher of demons. Many who were extremely poor and miserable attained prosperity, power and glory beyond human expectations. The *Puranas* are filled with many such examples. And many who were immensely prosperous were brought down to unimaginably deplorable conditions in life as a result of their negative self-effort.

All of the numerous conditions of prosperity and adversity that people encounter are a result of their self-effort alone. Study of scriptures, receiving instructions from a Guru, and practising meditation on the Self — all these are expressions of one's own self-effort. Without these, one cannot attain Self-realization.

Whoever desires to gain prosperity must detach his mind from inauspicious activities and direct it to the blessed task of divine realization. This is the sum and substance of all scriptural teachings.

O Beloved Child, endeavor to attain that which is glorious and eternal, not that which is petty and perishable. This is the theme of all spiritual instructions.

It is by self-effort that men attain success in their projects. It is by the virtue of self-effort that wise men grow in their spiritual majesty. All talks of destiny are meant for wiping the tears of the weak-minded. It is merely for the sake of consolation that people condemn destiny as the cause of their adversities.

Everything is achieved in this world as a result of self-effort. It is by self-effort that one eats his food. It is by self-effort that one goes to a particular destination. Wise men were able to cross over raging oceans of adversities by their self-effort.

By taking recourse to good association, one becomes inclined to the study of scriptures. By study of scriptures, the intellect becomes subtle and purified. By the practice of scriptural knowledge, and by the service of one's preceptor, one develops spiritual understanding. With the increase of spiritual understanding (*Bhoda*), one becomes more devoted to one's preceptor as well as to the scriptures. This leads to one's ascent on the ladder of spiritual wisdom. This is the brief plan of that self-effort which leads to Self-realization.

Section 8 – *The Illusion of Destiny*

Oh *Rama*, out of ignorance, people talk of destiny. Like every other type of false knowledge, destiny has no form, no activity, no definite size or shape.

The mind creates a pattern of causation in the environment of ignorance. It develops the idea that, “I am reaping the result of the Karma that I sowed during my past days.” Such expressions are sustained by mere words, without the basis of a practical reality.

An insight into the law of Karma must enable one to discover the innate freedom of the soul to overcome all conditioning circumstances and obstructing conditions. But when one seeks consolation by asserting the law of Karma, he is resigning to a process of inertia.

The negative activity of the past is corrected by the positive activity of today. By the force of self-effort, even the fructifications of an evil action prove positive and auspicious in the life of an aspirant. Painful conditions are confronted by an aspirant in a spirit of austerity. Thus, though they are the result of sinful Karmas of the past, yet they give rise to internal strength when one adopts the proper attitude towards them.

An utter reliance on destiny is sustained only by the dull-witted. If such reliance has any validity, then such people should jump into a blazing fire with the conviction that unless destined, fire cannot burn them.

If one holds the false doctrine of absolute predestination, there should be no need for him to perform any action at all. He should not even engage himself in actions such as bathing, sitting, walking, talking, eating, giving in charity, and the like. There should be no need for spiritual teachings.

But such a philosophy can be maintained only by the dead. It is impossible for the living to stop activity even for a second. Whether a child or a learned scholar, all use their mind, intellect, senses, and body in order to attain whatever they desire. It is impossible to stop activity in the name of destiny.

The dull-witted have created an illusory concept of destiny in their minds. Whoever depends upon destiny and does not take recourse to self-effort goes to his own destruction. But wise men attain the fulfillment of their desires and the goal of their life by taking recourse to self-effort alone.

Is it possible for a true hero to wait for destiny in order to perform his efforts? Even those who have been prophesied to live long by astrologers cannot survive if they are slain by a sharp sword. And those who are supposed to become great scholars do not become so without taking recourse to study and other efforts.

The ancient *Puranas* are replete with examples of the glory of self-effort. This Sage *Vishwamitra* attained *Brahmanhood* by his immense self-effort. Even the demons were able to overpower the gods by their self-effort alone. And in their turn, the gods defeated the demons by their self-effort.

Therefore, *Sri Rama*, do not become deluded by the illusion of destiny. Take recourse to the best form of self-effort and attain Self-realization.

**Section 9 – The Illusoriness
of Actions and the Reality of the Self**

Sri Rama asked: Oh Sage, you know all spiritual mysteries. Is this destiny (*Daiva*) real or unreal?

Sri Vasistha explained: Self-effort alone is real. It is by self-effort that you possess this body. Destiny does not perform anything. It is imagined by the dull-witted.

When one's self-effort has determined a course of movement, it is termed "destiny" by the unthinking mind. Just as one perceives blueness in the sky due to illusion, so one imagines destiny in the workings of one's self-effort due to ignorance.

When a person asserts that he is led to good and evil actions by destiny, he is indulging in erroneous knowledge. It is his own self-effort of the past that asserts itself in all his inclinations and movements. By placing blame on destiny, he justifies his present lack of self-effort.

Sri Rama asked: If the past Karma becomes the destiny of the present embodiment, how is it possible to consider destiny nonexistent?

Sri Vasistha replied: You must understand the true nature of things. There arise subtle desires (*Vasanas*) in the mind due to the veil of ignorance *Avidya*. These *Vasanas* convert themselves into physical and vocal actions. As one thinks, so he speaks and acts.

As is the nature of the *Vasanas*, so is the type of activity that proceeds from an individual. Actions follow the *Vasanas* of the mind.

Destiny is nothing but the fructification of one's own Karmas. Karmas are nothing but subtle desires of the mind. These subtle desires are mere waves of the mind, and the mind is nothing but Pure Consciousness when the illusion of desires is negated. Therefore, the concept of destiny is illusory.

Pure Consciousness is the reality behind the mind. That Consciousness is *Purusha*, the Self. Therefore, self-effort (*Purushartha*) which is meant to reveal the nature of the Self in man, is supremely powerful. There is nothing impossible for self-effort. May your self-effort be auspicious, Oh *Rama*!

Sri Rama asked: If a person is led by the subtle desires of his past life, what can he do but experience his dependence on the past Karma? I am made to dance by my previous *Vasanas*. How can I experience the freedom of my Self?

Sri Vasistha explained: Oh *Rama*, you also developed the inclination towards spiritual movement on the basis of the *Vasanas* that are operating at present. The mere presence of *Vasanas* does not obstruct your spiritual movement.

There are two types of *Vasanas* – auspicious and inauspicious. If your previous *Vasanas* are auspicious, you do not have to fight against them. You will be led by them towards the fulfillment of your self-effort in the form of Liberation.

But if you are backed up by inauspicious *Vasanas*, you must conquer them by the intensity of your present self-effort. You must overcome the negative tendencies of the mind by taking recourse to good association and study of scriptures.

The river of *Vasana* flows either through the course of auspiciousness leading one to the attainment of Liberation, or through the course of inauspiciousness leading one to the increasing illusions of the world-process.

One may train his mind just as he would train a child, and discourage it from its movement through the course of inauspiciousness. When the mind moves along with the egoistic vision, generating attachments and desires, then this erroneous movement must be curbed again and again.

And having discouraged the mind from flowing towards the illusions of the world, one must allow it to flow towards the Self through good association, study of scriptures, reflection, meditation, and *Samadhi*.

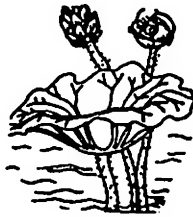
By repeated effort, *Shubha Vasanas* (auspicious subtle desires) can be intensified. When you are backed up by *Shubha Vasanas*, you move on the path of spiritual attainment with an increasing sense of spontaneity.

Even when you are still confused regarding the efficacy of good actions, you must continue to perform them. Because even if there are no fruits from good actions, what harm is there? But if there

are fruits in the form of the intensification of good *Vasanas*, you will be led to Self-realization. Stupendous is this attainment!

Even in worldly activities, repeated effort endows a person with an intensity of skill and mental concentration. This is applicable to all, whether a person is a child or an adult. Therefore, try again and again to promote good *Vasanas* in your *Chitta* (mind).

One must continue to cultivate good *Vasanas* until intuitional knowledge of the Self arises with the help of instructions from Guru, study of scriptures and practice of meditation. Having realized the Self, you will rise beyond the *Shubha Vasanas* as well. You will then abide in the Absolute.



• See YOGA CAN CHANGE YOUR LIFE
by Swami Jyotir Maya Nanda

Section 10 – *The Origin
of Sage Vasistha*

Sage *Vasistha* continued: *Brahman* is the Reality underlying all that exists. It is on the basis of this immutable Existence that the illusion of causation is sustained by the human mind. The mind sees everything in the terms of causation: "If there is an effect, there must be a cause; and if there is a cause, there must be an effect." This is the manner in which the mind continues to evolve its mentations.

The Cosmic Law that regulates the objects of the world and conditions them to their distinct characteristics and attributes is sustained by the Truth of the Divine Self. It is this underlying sustenance that gives the quality of burning to fire, fluidity to water, movement to air, and vibration to the ether. This world conditioned by *Niyati* (Cosmic Law, often misinterpreted as Destiny) is not opposed to the spiritual unfoldment of the soul.

The world that evolved out of *Maya* is meant to aid every soul towards its spiritual unfoldment. Therefore, there is no need to exercise one's self-effort to bring about alterations in the basic characteristics of the objects and the Divine Law operating through them. One's self-effort must be directed towards *Shreya* (Supreme Blessedness in the form of Liberation).

I will relate to you the manner in which I received enlightenment from the teachings of the Creator. Listen to this account with attention. Your mind will become friendly to you by your self-effort.

As long as the mind is unfriendly, the senses are steeped in desires for the objects of the world. You must learn the art of conquering the senses, and thus, mastering the mind.

Oh *Rama*, *Brahman* is the substratum of this vast universe. From that *Brahman* there arose the Divine *Vishnu*, the sustaining aspect of God in the form of the Cosmic Self. This emanation was due to the operation of *Maya* (Cosmic Illusion).

From the lotus of the heart of the Divine *Vishnu* there arose the four-faced *Brahma* (the Creator). This lotus from which *Brahma* emerged is, in fact, the essence of the Cosmos. Its petals are the directions. The *Sumeru* Mountains are the pollen grains of the lotus. In brief, the entire universe is figuratively represented as the unfolding lotus of the Divine Self.

Brahma (Cosmic Mind) emerged from this lotus that proceeded from Lord *Vishnu*. He created different living beings along with the objects of the world. Realizing that the souls caught in the process of the world must suffer endless miseries, he developed compassion, and thus, created austerity, ethical values of life, charity and truthfulness as spiritual aids by the help of which the souls could cross the ocean of the world-process.

However, the absolute cessation of misery is not possible without the attainment of wisdom. Therefore, *Brahma* wanted to create the boat of wisdom, by the help of which the souls might cross the ocean of the world-process. So he planned to create the scripture of wisdom.

By his mental will, *Brahma* projected a boy after his own image, and the boy recognized him as his Divine Father. That boy was myself (Sage *Vasistha*).

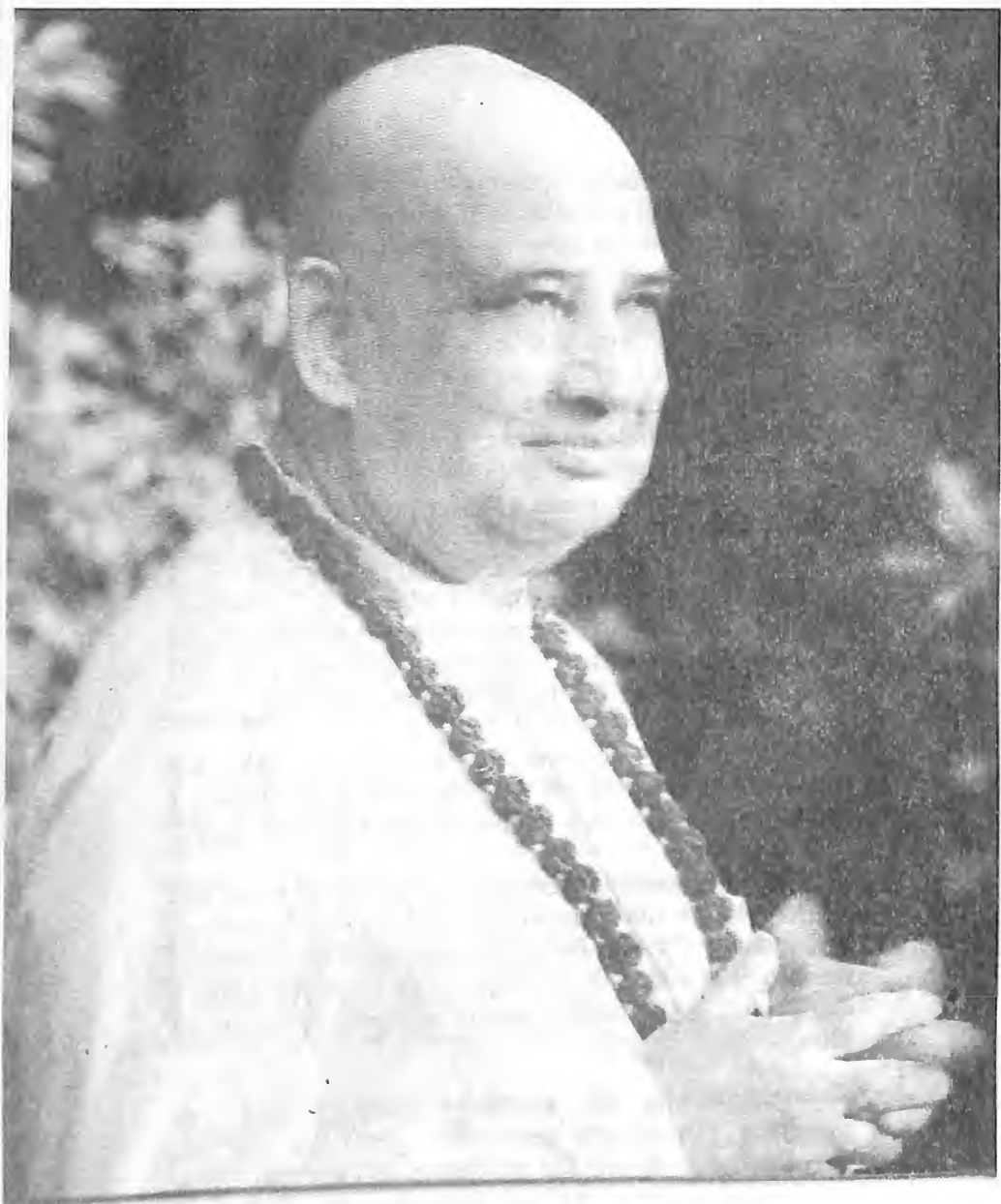
The Divine Father welcomed me with great love and said, "Oh Son, just as a cloud crosses the full moon, a taint of ignorance will enter into your mind for a little while, so that I may enlighten you with the knowledge of the scriptures. The teachings that I will give you will become a powerful boat for human beings to cross the ocean of the world-process."

Immediately I was affected by ignorance. I became miserable and afflicted with grief. I reflected, "Whence has this evil of the world-process developed in my consciousness?" So engrossed was I in this reflection that I did not perform any function.

The Divine *Brahma* asked: "Oh Son, why are you miserable? Tell me the cause of your misery. I will show you the way to the cessation of your grief."

At this I asked: "Oh Divine Father, how did this world arise in the consciousness of the soul? How can I destroy it?" Great *Brahma* expounded the immortal teachings of wisdom. By the help of those teachings, I discovered my essential nature and enjoyed supreme bliss.

Concluding his teachings, *Brahma* said, Oh *Vasistha*, I inflicted you with ignorance for the purpose of creating the scripture of wisdom. Now you must proceed to the plane of the earth and become the preceptor of wisdom for the aspiring mortals."



श्री स्वामी ज्योतिर्मयानन्द

Oh *Rama*, thus commanded by *Brahma*, I live in this world to guide the spiritual aspirants on the path of Liberation. As long as aspirants dwell on this earth, so long will I abide in the Self. I have nothing to gain from this world. I obey the command of the Creator without being tainted by ignorance and egoistic vision.

Adopting himself as an example, Sage Vasistha gives a figurative parable explaining the fact that wisdom proceeds from the Divine Self. It is not sustained by the intellectual functions of the mind. Rather, it is revealed by intuition. Every human being is a child of the Divine Creator. However, he is with ignorance for a short time. The state of ignorance does not belong to the soul. Even the millions of incarnations in the world-process are, in fact, a deviation from the Divine Truth only for a "short while." Everyone is essentially the Divine Self. Thus, showing the authenticity of his spiritual teachings, Sage Vasistha begins to enlighten Rama by presenting the essence of all scriptures.

Section 11 – The Descent of Spiritual Wisdom

Sri Rama asked: Oh Sage, how did the Creator decide to reveal the path of wisdom for the world of mortals? Please explain this to me in detail.

Sri Vasistha responded: In this beginningless *Samsara* (world-process), the rising of the Creator is like a wave in the ocean. *Brahma's* mind contains the impressions of his previous creation. Having a deep insight into the miseries that arise out of ignorance, *Brahma* willed to manifest the path of wisdom for leading the souls from darkness to light.

Just as he sent me to the mortal world, he also sent other great Sages such as *Sanaka*, *Sanandana*, *Sanat Kumara*, *Narada* and others to teach human beings according to the different stages of evolution.

The spiritual knowledge was first prevalent among the kings who lived under the guidance of the Sages. Therefore, this knowledge is described as *Raja Vidya* – the Royal Knowledge. It is also termed as *Raja Guhya* – the Royal Secret. Later the kings became identified with their bodies and lost their insight into the truths of the Self. Therefore, there is a great need to propagate this wisdom through the medium of your qualified personality.

Oh *Rama*, most people develop *Rajas Vairagya* – dispassion that arises by perceiving pain in the objects of the world. This perception of pain is *Rajasic* in nature; therefore, such dispassion is conditional and is sustained by a cause in this world.

But you have developed an unconditional form of *Vairagya*. Your dispassion is *Sattwic* (pure). Who does not develop disgust towards filthy objects? But real dispassion is that which arises due to discrimination.

They are the great souls who develop dispassion due to the purity of their minds. Such souls are adorned with a pure intellect. Those who are identified with their bodies and are bound to their desires are like worms and insects in this world-process.

Wise men cross the ocean of the world-process on the raft of wisdom. Without wisdom, the miseries of the world continue to afflict the heart of a person for a long time. Without the method of wisdom, one cannot endure the pairs of opposites with which the world abounds.

Just as straws are consumed by fire, so the ignorant are consumed by the fire of grief at every step. But a forest that is drenched in rain cannot be burnt by fire. In the same way, a wise man who is filled with the nectarine waters of wisdom cannot be destroyed by the fires of the world-process.

A Sage with enlightenment is not affected by the cyclones and hurricanes of the world-process. He is like the *Kalpaka* Tree (Mystic Tree) rooted in the Immutable Self.

An aspirant desirous of attaining knowledge must approach a Sage who has a purified intellect in order to receive instructions on the path of wisdom. When taught by an unqualified teacher, the spiritual teachings do not settle into one's mind.

Oh *Rama*, you are the best among the enquirers, and I am well-versed in the art of teaching the truths of the scriptures. Listen to my instructions, and having understood their meanings, abide by them.

You are endowed with the qualities of compassion, generosity, dispassion and insight. The teachings will settle in your heart just as any color dye settles in a white cloth.

The mind is like a monkey on the tree of the world-process. This monkey must be controlled if one would listen to the teachings pertaining to the Divine Self. An aspirant must keep himself at a distance from those who are devoid of discrimination and are immersed in evil, and he must take recourse to good association.

Association with the wise gives rise to discrimination (*Viveka*). Enjoyment and release – these are the fruits of the tree of discrimination.

There are four gatekeepers at the palace of Liberation: *Shama* (Serenity), *Vichar* (Reflection), *Santosh* (Contentment), and *Satsanga* (Good Association).

All these must be pursued with effort. If one cannot follow all four, then he must practise only three from these. If this is difficult, he should follow any two. And even if he were to follow only one of these four, the other three will join him as he advances.

A man with discrimination is like the effulgent sun, while a man who is devoid of discrimination is like a frosty night. Therefore, Oh *Rama*, cultivate the virtue of discrimination and be endowed with all the great qualities that arise out of a discriminative intellect.

Study of scriptures, listening to their expositions, reflecting upon their implications, and meditating upon the Self – these are the methods of developing *Prajna* (intuitive knowledge). An aspirant must amass the wealth of *Prajna* in order to destroy ignorance.

This poisonous tree of the world-process is the abode of all miseries. It deludes those who have no discrimination and are afflicted with ignorance.

One who is endowed with a subtle intellect that can reason, analyze and understand the secrets of the scriptures is called *Purusha* — a true human being. You are indeed a true aspirant endowed with all the great qualities. You will realize the Self as if it were the shining moon in a cloudless sky.

Section 12 — *The Evils of the World-process
and the Glory of Wisdom*

Sri Vasistha continued: Oh *Rama*, just as the ocean is the abode of all precious jewels, so you are the abode of all the great qualities of a spiritual enquirer. And verily, I am the abode of all the qualities needed in a spiritual speaker. Therefore, listen to the teachings of the scriptures.

All actions and activities cease when *Brahman* is realized. Realization of *Brahman*, the Absolute, is the Supreme Goal of all movements in life. If such a goal did not exist to be realized by the pure-minded, why should one have to go through the painful process of enduring the sufferings of the world? Aspirants would have found it easier just to give up their lives.

A snake gives up its skin and glides on. In the same way, a man of wisdom, having given up his mental griefs and anxieties, abides in the Absolute Self. For him, the world becomes like a magic show. But for one who is devoid of wisdom, this world is the source of all miseries.

Attachment to the world is the source of all sufferings. It envenoms a person like the poisonous bites of snakes. It slays a person with the sword of agony. It pierces a person with the spear of grief. It binds a person with the ropes of mental, interpersonal dependencies, and burns him with the fires of pain. It blinds him with the darkness of Ignorance, and knocks him unconscious by hurling the stones of disillusionment at his head. It robs him of his reason, destroys his integrity, and hurls him into the dark wells of infatuation. It infests him with the white ants of cravings, and churns him through the cycles of birth and death.

Attachment is a dread disease, like cholera, because it forces one to identify with the body of flesh, blood and waste matter; and the web of its contagion is spread out in the form of numerous entanglements with relatives and friends.

Here in this world-process, the souls are pelted with the stones of afflictions, cut down by the swords of grief, and thrown down from the cliffs of transient enjoyments. They are burnt with the fires of sufferings, and chilled in the icy regions of frustrations and fears. They are powdered like sandal paste on the stones of obstacles, and driven through the thorny forests of bitter circumstances.

They are forced across the burning sands of adversities, and are beaten by the torrential rains of afflictions. They are slain by Ignorance again and again through numerous embodiments. How can they enjoy peaceful sleep in a world where they are being choked and suffocated by the forces of darkness?

But those Sages, Oh *Rama*, who are endowed with the armor of wisdom, and are devoted to meditation, repetition of *Mantras*, and the

performance of sacrificial actions – they are not affected by the miseries of the world-process. They are endowed with the Light of spiritual vision. Being fully satisfied, they live like *Vishnu*, *Brahma*, and *Shiva*.

Section 13 – Introduction to the Four Gatekeepers
The First Gatekeeper: Shama (Serenity)

Sage *Vasistha* said: Having attained enlightenment, Sages roam in this world like emperors. They neither grieve during adverse conditions, nor desire prosperous conditions in life. Though performing their daily duties well, they are actually “non-performers of action” because of their inner detachment.

The constant recollection of objects, and the eagerness to acquire them – these are primary causes for the distractions of the mind. Devoid of these, the mind of a Sage becomes like the nectarine moon abounding with infinite bliss.

When the mind is immersed in the Bliss of the Self, it does not create the illusions of distraction, nor does it run after the *Vasanas* (subtle desires) sustained by the ego. It renounces its childish fickleness, and enjoys the Glory of the Self.

An aspirant must continue to listen to the teachings about the Self again and again, and then he must reflect upon what he has heard. Having rendered the mind one-pointed, he should allow the mind to flow on to *Brahman* by the practice of profound meditation. Listening, reflection and meditation must be continued throughout one’s entire life, for the true purpose of one’s existence is the attainment of Self-realization.

A person is not really tortured so much by fever and other diseases, poison, or adversities, as he is by the miseries arising out of his own folly. And by listening to the scriptures, this inner folly, Ignorance, is removed from the mind.

All adversities, even the most humiliating conditions, arise out of Ignorance. It is better to live by begging from the lowliest of men (the outcasts) than to live a life reconciled with Ignorance. It is better to be a worm in the hollows of a tree, or to abide in a dark well than to live a life of folly.

Until the sun of discriminative reason rises in the firmament of the heart, the frost of cravings continues to affect the lotus of human consciousness. But with the rising of knowledge, the lotus blooms, revealing the infinite expansion of the Self.

Men in the world suffer endless miseries due to their own ignorance. Pain follows pleasure, and pleasure follows pain. An ignorant person is constantly led up and down, as if he were mounted on a wheel of a machine. The conditions of pleasure and pain are short-lived, like flashes of lightening.

An aspirant should seek the support of *Viveka* (discriminative knowledge), and cultivate *Vairagya* (dispassion) by repeated effort (*Abhyasa*) in order to cross the ocean of the world-process. Having entered this transient world, one who does not endeavor to attain the Self is like a person who slumbers in a thatched house that is being consumed by fire.

When a person develops the inclination towards enquiry into the nature of Self-realization, he is ready to attain Liberation in a short time. True happiness consists in attaining Liberation from the wheel of birth and death. There is no real happiness anywhere in the three worlds.

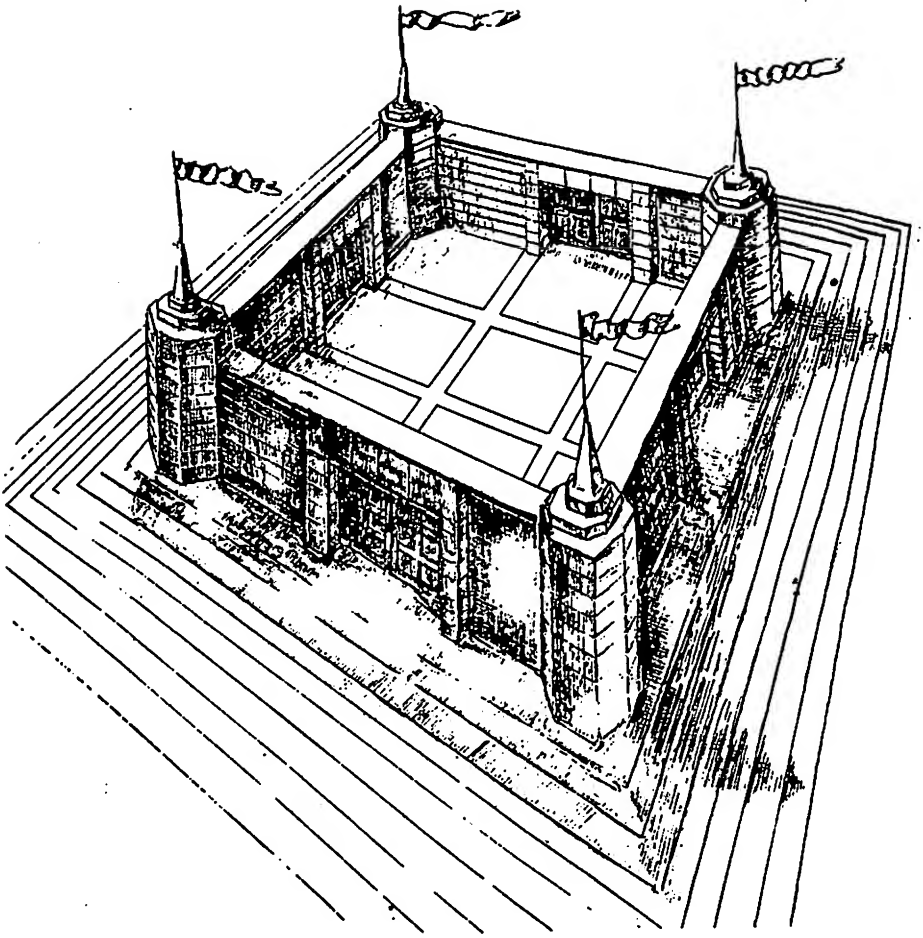
The attainment of Self-realization alone brings a person to his ultimate prosperity. Wealth, friends, relatives, diverse forms of religious rituals, pilgrimages, and austerities cannot help a person fulfill the inner urges of his soul.

One should enquire into the art of conquering the mind. This is the secret of attaining peace and contentment. By controlling the mind, a Yogi experiences the Bliss of the Self. Whether walking, sitting, roaming, running or falling, one must continue to enjoy the fruit (intuitive vision) and the blossoms (serenity and contentment) of the tree of discrimination.

Now listen to more about the four gatekeepers at the Palace of Liberation: Serenity, Contentment, Enquiry, and Good Association. Serenity (*Shama*) leads to supreme goodness. It is the highest abode; in fact, it is *Shiva* himself. It is serenity that dissolves the mist of delusion. Nourished by the nectar of serenity, a person is able to transform hatred into love. Even the most inimical mind is transformed into a friendly mind by the magical power of serenity.

One cannot even have as much confidence in one's own mother as one can have in a Sage who is endowed with serenity. A man of serenity cannot be hurt even by demons, evil spirits, enemies, tigers and snakes. Wearing the armor of serenity, a Sage is unaffected by the piercing arrows of misery.

The love that is awakened in the heart of a person who has seen a serene Sage cannot be experienced even towards the dearest of one's relatives. All the actions of such a Sage are commended by all living beings.



Four Gates to Liberation

Artist- Hamsa Yogi

Though aware of the faults and deceits of others, a Sage endowed with serenity continues to maintain a balanced mind at all times. His moon-like face is never depressed or elated, even in conditions of death, war, or prosperity. He is unaffected by fear, attachment and anger.

If one does not become identified with the body, and does not intensify his egoistic vision even in the worst of conditions or during long-lingering adversities, then he is truly a Sage endowed with serenity. Among all ascetics, all learned men, all performers of sacrifices, kings, emperors, and men of power, none can excel a Sage endowed with serenity.

Section 14 — *The Second Gatekeeper:*
Vichara (Spiritual Enquiry)

Sri Vasistha continued: Oh *Rama*, a wise aspirant should practise enquiry into the nature of the Self at all times. When reason is purified by enquiry, it glimpses the Truth of the Divine Self, and thus, eradicates the root disease, Ignorance, which is the cause of this world-process.

There are various forms of enquiry. By enquiring into the illusory nature of the pleasures of the world, an aspirant develops Vairagya (dispassion). He enquires into the mysteries of Karma and Upasana (action and devout meditation) in order to purify his mind. With increasing mental purity, he listens to the meanings of the scriptures from a spiritual preceptor. Thus, Vichara promotes the art of listening. Shravana (listening) matures into Manana (reflection). Reflection on the nature of the Self is the most intensive form of enquiry. Continuous flow of mind towards the Absolute (Brahman) is the fruit of constant enquiry. And this fruit yields the nectar of Self-realization.

Hewn down by the sharp sword of enquiry, this forest of adversity does not sprout and flourish anymore. When one has lost a dear relative, or has met with a terrible calamity, his intellect becomes clouded by delusion and his mind restless. During such conditions, wise men take recourse to enquiry in order to allay the sufferings of the heart, and to determine the right course of action to be adopted in life.

By the power of enquiry, the intellect gives up what is inauspicious and tends to what is auspicious and enlightening. There is no raft more stable or efficient to take one across the turbulent stream of misery than the practice of enquiry.

By using the power of reason, great men are able to choose a course of action in accordance with their strength, capacity and ability in any given situation of life. Only the lion of enquiry can destroy the elephants of delusion that threaten to crush the lotus of discriminative knowledge in the lake of the heart.

Great men of all times attained mighty kingdoms, immense prosperity, and unimaginable power; all these were the fruits of the wish-yielding tree of *Vichara* (enquiry).

An intellect that is purified by the practice of enquiry does not sink in the waters of adversities. Rather, it floats above all adverse conditions like an air-filled raft.

All miseries in life are the flowers and fruits of the tree of irrational intellect. Want of enquiry excels collyrium in its blackness, and is more intoxicating than any strong liquor or alcoholic drink.

When the lotus of enquiry blooms in the lake of the heart, one shines like the mighty Himalayas. Such

a soul manifests sublimity, lofty character, mental stability, and divine realization.

The mind of a person who lacks enquiry is filled with dullness. Even the cooling moon can strike such a person like a thunderbolt. Just as a child is afraid of a nonexistent ghost, so a dull-witted person is afraid of numerous illusory projections of his own diseased mind.

Irrationality is the storehouse of all misery in life. An aspirant must curb this evil quality of the mind by the practice of enquiry and by the promotion of rationality in his life.

By the practice of enquiry, the mind becomes free from its slavery to desires. The rising of *Viveka* (discriminative knowledge) adorns one's personality much as the moon adorns the green forests and placid lakes at night.

Due to want of reason and enquiry, all objects of the senses appear charming and desirable. But by the force of enquiry, they become dissipated into mere dust particles. Just as coolness proceeds from the moon, so bliss proceeds from enquiry.

Spiritual enquiry leads to the attainment of the Immutable State of Liberation. A liberated Sage does not desire what has not been acquired and does not abandon what has been acquired. He goes beyond accepting the desirable and negating the undesirable. He becomes fully satisfied in his own Self.

By the practice of enquiry, a Yogi renders all his subtle desires incapable of projecting the illusions of the world. Just as mist disappears in the vast sky before the burning rays of the effulgent sun, so the desires of his mind dissolve in the vastness of his

consciousness. Devoid of subtle desires, his mind is no longer distracted and his life is no longer affected by the afflictions of *Raga* (attachment) and *Dwesha* (hatred).

One perfected in spiritual enquiry becomes detached from all the objects of the world. He sees the world as a dream wherein there is nothing real or substantial. He abides in his essential nature wherein the three states – waking, dream and deep sleep – are transcended.

The vision of enquiry is not even obstructed during the darkest nights, nor is it dazzled by the effulgence of the sun itself. It is not veiled by the objects of the world.

A man lacking enquiry is truly blind. Be compassionate towards such people, for their lives abound with numerous pitfalls and unknown misery. Diseases, poison, injury by weapons and venomous snakes do not create as much sorrow as the lack of enquiry does. It drives a person to a ceaseless experience of misery from one birth to another.

It is better to be a frog in a swamp, or a vermin in filth, or a snake in a dark cave, than to live a life without reason and enquiry.

One should enquire, “Who am I?” and “Whence is this world-process?” Thus, one will acquire the knowledge of Self if he is guided by a spiritual preceptor. The knowledge of Self destroys all misery and gives rise to supreme peace.

**Section 15 – *The Third Gatekeeper:*
*Santosh (Contentment)***

***Sri Vasistha* said: Oh Heroic *Rama*, contentment is the highest blessedness. It is heavenly bliss. The joy of peace that is experienced by a contented person cannot be imagined or described.**

Compared to the bliss of contentment, even rulership over a vast empire is but a worthless straw. An intellect that is filled with contentment is never agitated even in the most adverse conditions of life.

One who has enjoyed the nectarine drink of contentment, finds all the enjoyments of the world as bitter as poison. Contentment destroys all the diseases and afflictions of the mind. The joy that is derived from contentment cannot be experienced even in the stream of heavenly nectar.

A truly contented person does not desire any object which has not yet been acquired, nor does he subject himself to elation because of an object that has been acquired. Having understood the illusoriness of all the objects of the world, he maintains his mind in the same balanced state both before acquiring an object and after acquiring it.

As long as the mind is not inclined to the Self, so long it continues to bring forth numerous creepers of misery. But just as a lotus blooms with the rising of the sun, so the lotus of contentment blooms with the rising of intuitive vision.

A discontented mind is like a mirror clouded by dust and fog; but a contented mind is like a clear mirror that is able to reflect the divine nature of the Self. One whose inner contentment has freed him from physical and mental afflictions, though he may be poor, enjoys even more than kings and emperors.

One who is not distracted by desires for objects which have not yet been acquired, and is contented with the present conditions of his life — such a person is truly contented. He delights the world with his righteous deeds.

The Goddess of Prosperity, *Sri Lakshmi Devi*, abides in the face of a contented person. The very presence of a contented person radiates joy and prosperity in the atmosphere. All great glories and powers await like slaves to serve such a Sage at his behest.

Just as dust particles subside during rain, so all mental agitations and worries subside when the peaceful experience of contentment rains its nectarine waters of bliss in the firmament of one's heart.

The sight of vast stores of wealth does not give as much joy as a mere glimpse of a face that is lit up with the light of contentment. A contented person is praised by all virtuous souls, and is adored even by Gods and Celestial Beings of the higher worlds.

Section 16 — *The Fourth Gatekeeper:* *Satsanga (Good Association)*

Sage *Vasistha* continued: Oh Wise *Rama*, there is nothing more beneficial in human life than good association. *Satsanga* (good association) helps a person in every walk of life.

When the tree of *Satsanga* is nourished, it gives rise to the exquisite white flowers of *Viveka* (discrimination) which matures into the fruit of Liberation.

In association with a Sage, even adversity is converted into prosperity. Wherever a wise man abides, there even the pathos caused by the death of a dear relative is transformed into a joyous festivity.

Good association destroys the blooming flowers of adversity even like a frost and drives away the clouds of delusion even like a forceful wind.

Good association enhances the faculty of one's reason, removes the veil of Ignorance, and allays the sufferings of the mind.

No matter how great an adversity might befall a person, no matter how entangled he might become, he should not give up *Satsanga* for a single moment.

Satsanga is the light that illumines the path of Truth. It is the dispeller of the darkness of the heart. Whoever bathes in the holy waters of *Satsanga* does not need to depend upon visiting pilgrimage centers, taking baths in sacred waters, and performing acts of charity. There is nothing more meritorious and purifying than a plunge in the Ganges of *Satsanga*.

As long as it is possible to come into contact with someone who is free from attachment and who has dispelled the doubts of his heart by wisdom, then one has no need to perform severe austerities and toilsome pilgrimages.

Just as a pauper beholds a jewel with wistful eyes sparkling with eagerness, so an aspirant should behold a Sage who has severed the knots of his heart.

Among the aspirants who are desirous of attaining immortality, he who devotes himself to *Satsanga* is always the first to attain the goal of existence.

An illumined person must be served with gifts, reverence, and in any other way possible, because he is the boat to take one across the ocean of the world-process. Saintly people are like clouds that gather to extinguish the fires of hell. Whoever ignores the golden opportunity of *Satsanga* becomes like dry fuel for the fires of hellish sufferings.

There is no remedy more effective than *Satsanga* for the removal of poverty, mortality, pain and adversity.

Contentment, good association, spiritual enquiry, and mental serenity – these are the four means of crossing the ocean of the world-process. These four, or at least one of these four, must be practised in order to eradicate the root cause of all sufferings – Ignorance.

There is no gain greater than contentment. There is no attainment greater than *Satsanga*. There is no wisdom greater than spiritual enquiry into “Who am I?” There is no happiness greater than mental serenity.

Oh Great-armed *Rama*, until the mind becomes eager to cultivate one of these four great qualities, there is no escape from this world-process. But with the assistance of these four great helpers, an aspirant can cultivate the best of spiritual qualities in his personality in a very short time.

Section 17 – *The General Plan of Yoga Vasistha*

Sage *Vasistha* continued: Oh *Rama*, just as the sky bereft of clouds is clear enough to reveal the lustrous beauty of the moon, so the mind of an aspirant that is free from the impressions of evil association is clear enough to reveal the grandeur of the Self.

If the tree of action in one's personality is laden with the fruits of virtue, then one is inclined to hear this divine scripture.

Yoga Vasistha, having a total of 32,000 verses, deals with Liberation and the manner of attaining it. A person slumbering in the night is awakened by the presence of a dazzling light, even against his will. In the same way, one who is slumbering in the darkness of Ignorance is awakened by the Light of *Yoga Vasistha*, even against his will.

The first chapter of *Yoga Vasistha* consists of 1500 verses. It is called *Vairagya Prakarana*, because it deals with the topic of dispassion. It also negates one's reliance on destiny, and shows how self-effort is all-powerful. One must develop *Vairagya* and attain Self-realization – this is the goal of self-effort.

The second chapter is known as *Mumukshu Prakarana*, since it deals with the topic of aspiration. It contains 1000 verses, and describes the qualities of those who aspire to attain Liberation.

The third chapter is called *Utpatti Prakarana*, and deals with the origination of the world-process. In 7000 verses it shows that the world arises on the

basis of illusion. When the illusion is removed by wisdom, the world vanishes from one's consciousness. It abounds with stories, illustrations, poetic similes, and profound instructions.

The fourth chapter, having 3000 verses, is called *Sthithi Prakarana* – the chapter on “establishment.” When the world is negated by one's intuitional vision, the soul in man becomes established in its essential nature – *Brahman*, the Absolute. It shows how *Brahman* assumes the role of seer and sight, and manifests as this world-process.

The fifth chapter is called *Upashanti Prakarana*. Containing 5000 verses, it shows the method of dissolving the multiplicity of the world-process. Therefore, it is called the chapter on quiescence. The clamor of the world is drowned in the silence of the Self. By gaining the insight that is presented in this chapter, a Yogi ascends the ladder of wisdom. The world becomes like a painted picture as he annihilates the impressions of worldliness from his unconscious mind.

The sixth chapter is called *Nirvana Prakarana*, because it deals with the topic of Liberation. It contains 14,500 verses and describes the method of destroying Ignorance in order to realize the Divine Self. With the destruction of Ignorance, all the ills of the body and mind are destroyed, the cause of pain is removed, and Infinite Bliss is realized.

Just as a black bee abides somewhere in a small corner of the vast *Meru* Mountains, so this world-process abides in a small portion of the mighty mountain of Ignorance. This Self sustains numerous worlds like dust particles scintillating in the rays of

the sun. The heart of a Sage becomes so vast that even the mighty Gods of Heaven cannot measure its expansion. There is nothing greater, more glorious or blissful than the realization of the Self.

Section 18 – *The Special Qualities of Yoga Vasistha*

Sri Vasistha continued: Oh *Rama*, seeds sown in the best soil give rise to a golden harvest. In the same way, the teachings contained in the six volumes of *Yoga Vasistha*, when sown in the fertile soil of the heart, give rise to the eternal harvest of Self-realization.

But even the most authentic teachings of the sacred scriptures cannot affect transformation in a human being unless they are understood at the level of his reason. The words of children, if they are intelligible to one's reason, should be accepted and honored, while the words of *Brahma*, the Creator himself, if they are disagreeable to reason, should be ignored like a straw. No teaching that is not accepted by one's reason will be able to unlift one's consciousness.

Those who ignore the study of *Yoga Vasistha* by asserting that they must receive spiritual instructions only from the most ancient scriptures such as the *Vedas*, are like those dull-witted men who would not drink water from a well that had been recently dug in front of their house, because they prefer to draw water only from the ancient wells dug by their forefathers.

When the vision of this scripture settles in the mind of an aspirant, his dark ignorance is dispelled as spontaneously as the night is dispelled with the rising of the sun.

By listening to *Yoga Vasistha*, a Yogi develops the art of directing his mind to his innermost Self. He is able to gather divine impressions in his *Chitta* (mind-stuff). His intellect begins to shine brighter and brighter as it is gradually freed from the clouds of greed, infatuation and other impurities.

Oh *Rama*, your intellect is pure. All that you need is to hear the wisdom which is going to be provided through the teachings of *Yoga Vasistha*. By utilizing this wisdom that separates the Self from the not-Self, you will render your mind as profound as the unruffled ocean, and as vast as the cloudless sky.

Protected by the armor of the wisdom of *Yoga Vasistha*, a spiritual hero will not be injured by degrading thoughts, which are the arrows of the world-process. Though confronted with terrifying conditions in life, he will not falter from his spiritual movement. The arrows of fear will fail to pierce his indomitable spiritual consciousness.

By reflecting upon the teachings of this scripture, one acquires the profundity of an ocean, the invincibility of a mountain, and the coolness of the radiant moon. With his veil of ignorance torn by the sword of wisdom, he becomes free from the influences of attachment and hatred.

Just as the *Pishachas* (the spirits of darkness) do not sport in the daytime, so the petty thoughts of the mind, the humiliating sentiments of the heart, and the perverted impressions of the unconscious do not persist when wisdom rises in the heart of an aspirant.

The intellect that has acquired steadiness by communing with the spiritual vision revealed in this scripture, remains unshaken in the midst of the stormy world-process. Just as a creeper within a painting cannot be shaken by the external winds, so the intellect that is established in the Self cannot be shaken by the winds of external conditions.

A Knower of Truth does not fall into the pits of attachment and delusion. How can a person well-acquainted with the path that he treads rush to fall into pits?

When the intellect of a Yogi is freed from all forms of attachment, he is able to comprehend the entire universe, nay, even the endless worlds that exist in every particle of this universe, within his own consciousness. He becomes the Knower of Maya (Cosmic Illusion).

When the intellect is purified, the experiences of pleasure and pain do not cause either elation or depression in the mind of a Yogi. He becomes fully contented with whatever he acquires in his daily life.

Oh *Rama*, whoever studies this scripture and reflects upon the meaning that is presented in it will affect a spiritual change in his personality. This is as true as curses or boons uttered by Gods. By reflecting upon the teachings of this scripture, one becomes fit to attain Self-realization. He does not need to undergo various disciplines of austerity, repetition of *Mantra*, or meditation in order to attain this goal. Mere understanding of the wisdom contained in *Yoga Vasistha* gives rise to Self-realization and is the goal of all austerities and spiritual disciplines.

There may be effort involved in crushing the tender petals of flowers, but there is no effort involved in attaining Self-realization. All one's effort is directed towards the removal of obstacles in the form of attachments, doubts and negative impressions. When the cloud is dispersed, the moon reveals itself without any effort.

In crushing a flower, one needs to exercise one's fingertips; but in attaining Realization, one needs to transcend even the subtle functions of intellect, not to mention the functions of the body. In fact, there is no physical or mental tension needed in order to sustain the Wisdom of the Self.

After listening to these teachings, one begins to understand that this world is like a dream. But one who is lazy or procrastinating in listening to the teachings of *Yoga Vasistha* will be unable to perceive the world as a dream, in spite of his intellectual conviction to that effect.

Oh *Rama*, the intellect that arises after listening to this scripture is that blessed intuition which bestows Self-realization upon a person – the supreme destiny of every soul. While the intellect led by the little lights of limited philosophical systems leads one to the forest of doubts and confusion, the intellect led by the wisdom of *Yoga Vasistha* leads one to the realization of the essential wisdom of all the *Vedas* declared in the great utterance, "I am *Brahman*. I am the Absolute Self. The Self is the Non-dual Reality. I am That Eternal Self."



Section 19 – *Brahman Is Revealed
by Right Knowledge (Pramana)*

Sage *Vasistha* continued: Oh *Rama*, this scripture which I am going to expound for you adopts various methods of right knowledge to reveal the Nature of the Absolute. The purpose of the scripture is to show the identity of the individual soul with the Divine Self by eliminating the illusory attributes which cause an erroneous separation between them.

The individual soul devoid of ignorance is the Absolute Self. In the same way, the Divine Self devoid of the illusory force of *Maya* is *Brahman*, the Absolute Self. The great utterance of the *Upanishads*, "Thou art That," refers to the identity of the soul with the Absolute Self.

Various illustrations are adopted to enlighten the mind regarding the illusoriness of the world, and the Non-duality of the Self. These illustrations cannot be absolutely perfect. Their purpose is to illumine the inner Truth, just as it is the purpose of a lamp to illumine the objects in a room.

The world is described as a dream in order to reveal its illusory nature. It is described as a "snake-in-a-rope" in order to show that it is a phenomenon of superimposition. The Self is described as vast as the sky in order to show that it is untouched by the clouds of mental desires and thought-processes.

The Self is described as the ocean in order to illustrate its fullness. Just as gold appears in different ornaments, so *Brahman* appears in the forms of the

numerous objects of the world. Thus, the illustration of gold is only to show the illusoriness of all names and forms.

One who adopts illustrations and arguments only to refute the views of other schools of thought is called a *Bodha Chanchu* — one whose wisdom is confined to the “beak” only. He is, as it were, a crow who is satisfied with pecking at wisdom without allowing it to descend into his heart.

One who negates the need for spiritual knowledge with his intellectual arguments, and thus promotes confusion in his own mind as well as in the minds of others, is indeed a *Bhoda Chanchu*.

All means of right knowledge terminate in the revelation of the Self. Any process of knowledge that does not reveal the Self is illusory and erroneous. A true process of knowledge, having revealed *Brahman*, ceases. When a fire has consumed its fuel, it stops burning.

The Self alone manifests in all internal thought-processes and in all the external objects of the world. The mind and the objects are vibrations in consciousness. They are illusory. In the state of spiritual realization, both are transcended.

This world of “objectivity” is sustained by the Light of the Supreme Seer (*Brahman*). The Self alone exists. Therefore, Oh *Rama*, do not entertain the thought that, “I am conditioned by the destiny generated by my past Karmas.” Rather, undertake right self-effort, and drive destiny out of your mind. Thus, acquire right knowledge in order to understand and realize the Self.

Section 20 – *The Conduct
of Enlightened Sages*

Sri Vasistha continued: Oh *Sri Rama*, an aspirant should take recourse to *Satsanga* (good association). He should nourish his intellect by receiving instructions from the Sages and reflecting upon them. Gradually, he should cultivate the great qualities that manifest in enlightened personalities.

If you do not find all the great qualities in one person, you should emulate whatever quality is seen in him. Without direct knowledge of the Self, it is impossible for anyone to develop serenity, control of the senses, discrimination, dispassion, and other such qualities, to the fullest extent possible.

Just as new sprouts develop during rains, so the bliss of Self enables one to develop new sprouts of great qualities. Lotuses adorn a lake, and the lake in turn sustains and adorns the lotuses. In the same way, serenity, self-control, and other qualities adorn the wisdom of a Sage, and in turn are adorned by his wisdom.

Wisdom grows by emulating the conduct of the Sages. The conduct of the Sages grows by increasing wisdom. Wisdom and sagely conduct are interdependent. A wise man should take recourse to wisdom by listening to the teachings of the Sages. He should also cultivate the divine qualities that intensify his movement towards the Self.

As long as wisdom and sagely conduct are not practised together for a long time, one cannot attain the Goal of one's self-effort – Self-realization.

A farmer woman, while guarding a paddy field, sings and claps her hands. The clapping of her hands serves the purpose of driving away birds from the field. In the same way, an aspirant listens to the teachings of the Sages and emulates the great qualities that abide in them. This results in the removal of the evil qualities of his personality such as attachment, anger, infatuation and ignorance.

O *Rama*, when *Nirmali* powder is added to muddy water, the latter is purified. In the same way, when the teachings of this scripture are introduced to the mind, all its impurities are removed.

When the mind comprehends the nature of *Brahman*, it becomes so overpowered by the glory of the Self that it is unable to interrupt the unceasing flow of the soul to the Divine Self.

There is intense awareness in the ignorant that "I am this physical body." If one were to develop the same intensity of awareness that "I am the Supreme Self," he would attain Liberation from the world-process even without his will.

*Thus concludes Mumukshu Vyavahara Prakarana
(the chapter dealing with the qualifications
of a spiritual aspirant) in Yoga Vasistha.*





Lord Brahma imparts wisdom to Sage Vasistha

Courtesy Gita Press, Gorakhpur, India

UTPATTI PRAKARANA

(The Chapter Dealing with the
Origination of Intuitive Vision)

Section 1 - *The Cause of Bondage*

A knower of *Brahman* realizes *Brahman* by the force of his ceaseless meditation on the true significance of great utterances such as "I am *Brahman*." Awakening is the cessation of dream. In the same way, to attain Liberation from the world-process, one needs to wake up to his essential nature. There is no other means to Liberation.

This chapter intends to show that this visible world abides in the Ether of *Brahman*, and that with the removal of ignorance, this world, along with its various ramifications, is negated. Then the questions, "What is this world? Whence did it arise? Where does it abide? etc." lose all significance.

Overcome by ignorance, *Brahman* assumes the role of the individual soul and experiences the world-process in the form of a dream. When one's essential nature is discovered by the force of intuitive wisdom, the dream of the world-process terminates.

Oh *Rama*, as long as there is the objectivity of the world-process in your consciousness, so long there is bondage. When the world-process is negated, there arises Liberation. Therefore, listen to the manner in which the intuitive light is born in an aspirant, and the manner in which it grows, leading to the negation of all names and forms.

That which is born is subject to growth, modification and death. It is the individual soul that subjects itself to the illusions of birth, death, heaven, hell, bondage and release. The Self is never born. It is beyond bondage and release. With deeper insight, even this world is not born, because it is an illusory modification of *Brahman*.

This world consisting of inert matter and conscious beings is like a dream in the midst of the deep sleep of *Pralaya* (Cosmic Deluge). With the cessation of the world-process, the Self alone exists, and is known as *Atman*, the Truth, the Absolute, the Supreme, *Brahman*, etc.. These names have been created by the Wise to guide the aspirants on the path of wisdom.

The Self, having forgotten its essential nature, enters into the process of material evolution, and becomes identified with the causal body and its effects. Thus confined to the world-process, it is called *Jiva* – the individual soul.

The Self first identifies itself with the causal plane of the cosmos, then with the Cosmic Mind (*Hiranyagarbha*), and gradually with *Virat*, the Cosmic Physical Being. Finally, having lost its universal expansion, it becomes identified with the diverse forms of living beings.

Ornaments made of gold have different names and forms, yet they are nothing but gold. In the same way, all the objects of this world and all the diverse conditions of pleasure and pain are nothing but the Self. Names and forms, the values and relationships are all sustained by the limited minds of the individuals.

Oh Child, the Seer (Self) has fallen into bondage because It has conceived the notion of “the Seen” — this universe of illusory names and forms. This world consisting of “I,” “you,” and “they,” is the illusory *Drishya* (the Seen). As long as there is *Drishya*, there cannot be *Moksha* (Liberation).

If you were to say, “This world does not exist; there is nothing here,” this would be mere crying in the wilderness. Even the very concept of negating this visible world implies that there is an opposing *Drishya* that can counteract the present *Drishya*. This implied opposing *Drishya* simply intensifies bondage.

Even though you may take recourse to hundreds of ritualistic performances such as bathing in holy streams, going to pilgrimage centers, and discussing spiritual matters, as long as *Drishya* exists for you, you cannot attain Liberation. This disease of the world-process cannot be negated by ignoring it indiscriminately. But it can be negated by taking recourse to *Vichara* — enquiry based upon increasing understanding of the nature of the Self.

It is intuitive vision alone that can terminate the illusion on the part of the “Seer” who is involved with the “Seen.” If it does not overcome this illusion by using the light of wisdom, then the “Seer” will continue to find itself trapped in a world-process, even if it were to hide itself in the depths of a rock.

Ignorance is the seed of the world-process. If ignorance is not removed by knowledge, the world-process cannot be negated. And without negating the world-process, there cannot be Liberation.

Even the states of Yogic *Samadhi* wherein the world is transcended cannot give Liberation, because when a Yogi comes back to normal consciousness, he finds himself again deluded by this world. As long as there is any awareness of this world of multiplicity, so long there cannot be true *Nirvikalpa Samadhi* – the highest state of superconsciousness.

Just as a person comes back to the miseries of the world after enjoying a deep sleep, so Yogis come back to this world after experiencing the bliss of *Samadhi*. As long as a Yogi is unable to develop that luminous understanding which negates the names and forms and perceives *Atman* as the only reality, so long he is not free from bondage.

As long as the mind itself is not negated, so long the world-process will continue to assert itself in one's consciousness. Wherever the *Chitta* (the mind) goes, there will exist this world-process.

As long as you are convinced that this world is real, so long your efforts in *Samadhi* will not release you from this world-process. But when you gain true insight into the illusoriness of the world, you abide in Non-duality while in *Samadhi* or out of *Samadhi*. A wise Sage abides in *Sahaja Samadhi* (spontaneous superconsciousness) at all times.

Oh *Rama*, this *Drishya Buddhi* (the intellect tainted by the reality of the world-process) is the seed of *Samsara* (the cycles of birth and death). Let this seed be scorched by the fire of wisdom. This is the only way to attain Liberation.

Section 2 — *The Ignorant
Are Devoured by Death*

Sage *Vasistha* told the following parable to illustrate the fact that the soul suffers from repeated births and deaths due to desires (*Kama*) and actions (*Karma*) generated by ignorance. When ignorance is destroyed in a wise Sage, then his pure Self, which is vast like the sky, cannot be affected by the illusory clouds of death.

Sri Vasistha said: Oh *Rama*, there lives a *Brahmin* known as *Akashaja* (the Sky-born). He is ever engaged in meditation, and in doing good to others. Seeing him exist through a long duration of time, Death desired to devour him. But just as a sword is unable to pass through a hard rock, so Death was unable to affect the *Akashaja Brahmana*.

Death, mustering up all his strength, wanted to destroy the *Brahmana* with his own hands, but soon found himself being consumed by a mystic fire whenever he approached the *Brahmana*. Finally, he pierced the fire, and spread out his thousands of hands to capture the *Brahmana*, but he did not succeed.

Thus baffled by his attempts to destroy the *Brahmana*, Death went to his controller and master, *Yama*, and asked, "Oh God, why am I unable to devour this *Brahmana*?"

Yama replied, "Oh Death, you do not destroy people. They are destroyed by their Karmas. If you want to destroy the *Akashaja Brahmana*, you must first seek his Karmas. Only with the help of his Karmas will you be able to destroy him."

Sri Vasistha continued: Then Death went to look for the Karmas of the *Brahmana* in various parts of the universe. He roamed through many countries, crossed rivers and oceans, scaled the heights of the mountains, explored the barren deserts, fathomed the depths of the ocean, and flew to the distant parts of the sky, but he could not find the Karmas of the *Akashaja Brahmana*. With a baffled mind, he returned to *Yama* and asked, "Oh *Yama*, I have been unable to discover any of this *Brahmana's* Karmas. Please enlighten me about the secrets of his Karmas."

Having pondered over this, *Yama* replied, "Oh Death, the *Akashaja Brahmana* has no Karmas. He is born of the sky, and is as taintless as the sky."

In fact, everyone is essentially born of the Self, and therefore, is like the Akashaja Brahmana. But due to ignorance, people identify themselves with the body, and become the performer of Karmas. Therefore, Death is able to destroy them.

Even the idea that "Akashaja Brahmana is born of the sky" is only from a figurative point of view. From the point of view of the enlightened Sage, nothing is born, and nothing is subject to death. Birth and death are perceived through the illusions of the mind.

Just as waves are the same as the ocean, so all the mental modifications which sustain the reality of the world-process are nothing but pure Consciousness. Thus, by the example of Akashaja Brahmana, Sri Vasistha described the nature of the Self. This Supreme Self is unborn, non-dual, and the essence of all that exists.

Section 3 – *Brahma's Creation Is Mental in Nature*

Sri Rama asked: Oh Sage, how is it that *Brahma*, the Creator, is not conditioned by desires and Karmas? If He has a body, He must have a previous Karmic basis. If *Brahma* creates on the basis of memories of His past lives, His creation ought to be real, and not illusory.

Sri Vasistha explained: Oh *Rama*, *Brahma* is untouched by any past Karmas. Those who are bound by Karmas have bodies as a result of their past deeds. But in the absence of previous Karmas, how can *Brahma* be controlled by memories of past lives?

The body of *Brahma* is *Ativahika* – subtle and spiritual. He does not possess a physical body like those who are overpowered by ignorance. Therefore, this creation exists on the basis of *Brahma's* mental will. It is not based upon real elements.

Brahma arises as a wave in Pure Consciousness. *Ahamkara* (the ego-principle) proceeds from *Brahma* (the Cosmic Mind). This creation is nothing but vibrations in Pure Consciousness. It exists like gusts of wind in the vast ocean of air.

Though manifest before the eyes of those who are ignorant, this creation is illusory. It exists in the mental imagination of the Creator. *Brahma* has two bodies: the absolute and the conditioned. The absolute body of *Brahma* is Pure Consciousness. His conditioned body is conceived by the limited minds of the individuals. To his own awareness, *Brahma* is ever free of a limited body.

In the case of an individual, even though he is essentially *Brahma*, the Divine Creator, yet his limited mind has created the illusion of physicality. Just as a child might project a ghost from his own mind and then become frightened by its terrifying visible aspects, so the individual soul is caught in the illusion of being confined to a physical body.

The externalization of the mind has led to one's forgetfulness with regards to the spiritual nature of the Self, and has created the illusion that, "I am this physical body." If the absolute body of *Brahma* is mental in nature, then his entire creation exists as ideas of the Cosmic Mind. Therefore, from the intuitional point of view, this world is unreal.

The mind that has risen to cosmic expansion (to the level of *Brahma*) dreams of this world, as it were, for fun and sport. But the mind that is limited and caught in illusion projects realities on what are actually dreams. The very same mind that perceives realities in the world is capable of rising to *Brahma*-hood and experiencing the world as an expression of thoughts and ideas drifting in the ether of Consciousness.

Just as a tree arises from the seed in which it was hidden, so the world-process arises from *Drishya Buddhi* (the intellect that is caught in the illusion of objectivity — the vision that is overpowered by ignorance).

If this world-process were real, then the miseries of the world would never terminate. It would be impossible to attain Liberation. When the knowing Self realizes the illusion of the visible objects of the world-process, It abides in Its own essential nature. Negating that which does not exist is a simple matter for the intuitive vision. Therefore, the attainment of that vision is the goal of one's spiritual movement.

Section 4 — *The Nature of the Mind*

Sri Rama asked: Oh Sage, what is the nature of the mind? Please explain to me how this mind has given rise to the efflorescence of the world-process.

Sri Vasistha explained: Oh *Rama*, just as this spacious ether does not exist apart from its name, so the mind has no form. It exists in name only.

This mind is neither outside nor inside. Just as the sky is all-pervasive, so the mind is all-pervasive.

As a mirage appears on scintillating sands, so this world appears on the illusory sands of the mind. Deluded knowledge is the stuff of the mind.

From the absolute point of view, the mind does not exist; yet from a practical point of view, the mind is that which causes the transcendental Self to be identified with the material world which is, in fact, illusory.

Oh *Rama*, consider *Samkalpa* (thought-waves) to be the mind. Just as water cannot be separated from liquidity, and air from vibration, so the mind cannot exist without the *Samkalpas*.

Whenever a desire for an object arises, the mind exists in the form of that desire. Mind and desire are inseparable. *Brahma*, the Creator, is of the nature of mind itself. The development of the idea of the physical body in the bodiless mind is the source of creation.

Ignorance, *Samsara* (the world-process), *Chitta* (the entire mind-stuff), *Manas* (the everyday mind), bondage, impurity, and obscurity (*Tamas*) – these are synonymous in their implications.

Mind and the visible world are interdependent processes of illusion. In fact, the world-process never came to exist. It does not exist in the three periods of time.

Just as a lotus creeper exists in its seed, so the world-process exists in an atom of Pure Consciousness. When the “seer” ceases to perceive the “seen,” that is described as the Liberation of the Self.

When the Self discovers its Absoluteness, the subtle desires of the mind disappear just as the movements of the trees and creepers cease when the wind stops blowing.

When the objects to be illumined (the directions, the earth and the sky) do not exist, then the Illuminer of all, the Self, exists in Its own essential nature. When Consciousness is freed from “I,” “you,” and “the world,” it abides in its essential glory.

Sri Rama asked: Oh Sage, if this visible world is real, it cannot cease to exist. The real cannot cease to be. If that is so, how can the miseries arising out of the world-process ever terminate?

Sage *Vasistha* replied: Oh *Rama*, this *Drishya* (the visible world) exists like a *Pishacha* (an evil spirit). The *Mantra* (incantation) that can drive this *Pishacha* away consists in understanding the Self.

Section 5 – The Divine Self
Is the Root of the Mind and the World

Sri Rama asked: Oh Sage, what is the source of the mind? Whence did this mind, which is the worker of such great illusions, arise? If one were to know the source of the mind, he would know the source of all that exists.

Sri Vasistha replied: Oh Child, during the dissolution of the universe, the imperishable Self alone exists. That Self is imperishable, immutable, self-effulgent, and the very embodiment of bliss. The followers of *Sankhya* call Him *Purusha*, while the Vedantins call Him *Brahman*. The nihilistic school of Buddhism describes Him as the Void.

Though ever existing in His own glory, the Self is veiled from one's view because of ignorance. Though abiding within them, the Self is far beyond the reach of the ignorant.

Just as innumerable rays proceed from the luminous sun, so the Gods and other living beings, as well as the innumerable world-systems, proceed like rays from the Effulgent Sun of the Self. They are like bubbles on the Vast Ocean of *Brahman*.

Just as waters from rivers and streams flow into the ocean, so this world-process flows on to merge in the Ocean of the Self.

That Self abides in the sky, in different bodies, in stones, in water, in creepers, in mountains – even in dust particles. It is by the power of the Self that the subtle body (constituted of the eight organs of action, the senses, the subtle elements, the Pranas,

ignorance, desire, action and mind) is pervaded by Consciousness. And it is also the power of the Self that renders the stones and inert objects mute, as if they were immersed in deep meditation.

He who has given voidness to the sky, solidity to the mountains, liquidity to the waters, and has taken up the sun as a lamp in His Hands, He is the source of the mind.

He is the inexhaustible cloud from whom the world-processes proceed like torrential rains. The three worlds shine and shimmer like a mirage in the vastness of the Self.

Though perishable while in the form of the world-process, the Self is essentially imperishable. He abides in every living being. Subtler than the subtlest, He is hidden in the cave of the heart; and greater than the greatest, He encompasses all that exists.

Maya is like a creeper that is born in the Ether of Consciousness (in the Self). *Chitta* (the total mind) is its root, while the senses are its leaves. The numerous worlds are its beautiful fruits. It is the breeze of the Self that enables this creeper to dance and grow.

By His Light, objects express their particular characteristics. He lends existence to that which exists, and nonexistence to that which does not exist. He manifests in the form of Gods, human beings, animals, and birds. He is indeed the source of both the mind and the world-process. Though sustaining the forces that create and destroy the universe, He is devoid of all actions and modifications. He is the Non-dual Reality.

If the world were real, then the attainment of Liberation would be an impossibility. It would be impossible to root out the seeds of the world-process in the form of ignorance, desire and action. But there are Liberated Sages living among Gods and human beings. Therefore, the world is illusory and unreal.

When the innermost Self abides in Itself, having risen above waking, dream and deep sleep states of consciousness, the world-process ceases to exist. The entry of the Self into the Self is like fullness entering into fullness.

In fact, this world does not exist. Even the seer and the seen are relative terms referring to the illusory appearance of the world-process. Even the reflected self in the intellect is illusory. *Brahman* alone exists.

Sri Rama said: Oh Sage, then your teachings seem as ridiculous as the statement that, "The son of a barren woman ground into pieces an entire mountain," or that, "The horns of a hare give forth wonderful music," or "The statues recite the *Vedas*," or "The clouds in the painting thunder and rumble."

Sri Vasistha responded: Oh *Rama*, my words are perfectly consistent with reason. Just as dreams appear to exist, but on waking, are nonexistent, so the world is nonexistent for the awakened Sages.

It is the mind that moves, prays, becomes involved, destroys, enters into bondage, and attains release. This entire world-process is the sport of the mind. The world does not exist apart from the mind.

**Section 6 – *The Self is Realized
Through Wisdom and Not Through Action***

Sri Vasistha said: This great God of Gods, the Absolute Self, can be realized through wisdom alone. The tiresome performance of Karmas (ritualistic actions) will not enable a person to attain Self-realization. No one can remove the illusion of mirage even if he were to engage himself in millions of actions. An illusion is broken by understanding and wisdom alone.

The Divine Self is not distant. He is not near either. He is neither easily attained nor difficult to attain. He is realized much as a golden necklace which was "lost" is discovered on one's own neck when the illusion of forgetfulness is removed.

Austerities, charitable actions, the observance of religious vows — these do not bring about Self-realization. They do help to purify the heart. But the attainment of Self-realization is directly dependent upon spiritual understanding.

Association with the wise and study of spiritual scriptures are the means of attaining knowledge. And knowledge removes the veil of ignorance. Therefore, a spiritual seeker should practise these for the attainment of Self-realization.

When an aspirant comes to realize that the Supreme Self alone exists, he attains the cessation of all the miseries and afflictions of the world-process. Knowledge, and knowledge alone, leads one to Liberation.

Sri Rama asked: Oh Sage, please tell me how a person can acquire knowledge. Should a person perform terrible austerities or difficult forms of penance to realize the Self?

Sri Vasistha continued: Oh *Rama*, an aspirant develops knowledge by listening to the scriptures expounded by his spiritual preceptor. After listening to those teachings, he practises reflection (*Manana*). This leads him on to the advanced practice of *Nididhyasana* (Vedantic meditation) wherein the mind becomes a continuous flow towards the Absolute Self.

Mere austerities without an intelligent approach towards the eradication of attachment, hatred, anger, pride, and other impurities of the mind, do not promote spiritual wisdom. Rather, they become painful.

Overcome by attachment, a person earns money by deceiving others. Then he practises charity with the help of that money. In fact, the fruit of charity does not go to one who has earned it by deception, but to the one who has been deceived. Whatever spiritual discipline one undertakes impelled by mental attachment, is a form of hypocrisy. It does not give rise to Liberation.

Why should you wander in the thorny bushes of austerities and severe spiritual discipline, when it is possible for you to roam in the gardens of spiritual wisdom? Good association and study of scriptures are the means of developing spiritual wisdom. Take recourse to these, and leave those arduous practices of the deluded mind. They can only intensify your mental illusions.

The self-effort that leads to knowledge of the Self is the only means to end all sufferings. Now listen as I describe the nature of that self-effort that should be employed by an aspirant.

An aspirant should adopt a virtuous means of livelihood, and pursuing the path of contentment, he should give up all desires for sensual enjoyments. He should direct his effort towards the study of scriptures and association with the wise. However, he should not be impatient.

He should be contented with whatever comes to pass according to the operation of his past Karma (fructifying actions). He should shun all activities that are either condemned in the scriptures or disapproved of by elevated personalities. By devoting himself to the teachings of his spiritual preceptor and by studying scriptures, he will attain Self-realization in a short time.

That great soul who has attained knowledge of the Self by the force of is spiritual enquiry, becomes great even in the eyes of great divinities such as *Brahma, Vishnu, Shiva* and *Indra*.

He is a wise person (a *Sadhu*, a Sage) who is endowed with wisdom, dispassion, and all the spiritual qualities enjoined in the scriptures. One should take refuge in him.

Among all forms of knowledge, spiritual knowledge that leads to Self-realization is highest. An aspirant should study the *Upanishads*, the *Gita*, *Yoga Vasistha*, and similar scriptures to promote that spiritual enquiry that leads to Liberation.

Alum, when mixed with water, allows the impurities in the water to settle down, leaving it clear and pure. And different forms of meditation enjoined on the path of *Raja Yoga* enable one to develop a mind that is free of restless thought-waves. In the same way, the discriminating knowledge that arises as a result of good association and study of scriptures enables a person to be free of all the impurities of the mind, including the root source of all impurities, ignorance (*Avidya*).

Section 7 – *The Absolute Without
the Limitations of the World-process*

Sri Rama asked: Oh Sage, where does *Brahman*, the God of Gods who is the cause even of *Hiranyagarbha* (the cosmic mind), whose knowledge destroys ignorance – where does that God abide? How am I to realize Him?

Sri Vasistha said: That God of Gods, Oh Illuminer of the *Raghu* race, abides in the body of every living being. He is the Pure Consciousness that underlies the functions of the mind, intellect, and senses. He abides in the innermost cave of one's heart. In fact, He is the Reality behind all the objects and beings of this world.

Sri Rama asked: Even a child can be made to understand that the world is Consciousness; but how can this understanding remove the miseries of one's existence?

Sri Vasistha explained: A mere intellectual assertion that Consciousness underlies all objects and beings cannot bring about Liberation. The individual soul is a reflection of the Self in the shining medium

of the intellect. When the soul becomes free from all the objects that shine by the light of the reflected self, and turns to the Self, the Source which illumines all objects, and by which all objects seem to develop the attribute of consciousness, then that soul attains the state of Liberation.

The soul is attracted to the objects of the world due to ignorance. With knowledge, this attraction can be checked, and the soul can be led to the Self.

The state of Liberation is free from all externalization. As long as external objects are recognized as "real," it is impossible to be free of the externalizing tendency of the soul. But when one realizes the illusoriness of objects by developing knowledge, externalization becomes impossible. With the cessation of the objects that are illumined by the Self, the latter shines in Its own Light.

In brief, Oh *Rama*, each *Jiva* (individual soul) is essentially Pure Consciousness; but due to externalization, it becomes fettered to various impurities of the mind, and is caught in the world-process of birth and death.

Sri Rama asked: If it is *Brahman* who becomes *Jiva* through externalization, then *Brahman* cannot be an absolute being. On the other hand, if *Jiva* does not attain *Brahman*, it cannot attain Liberation. Tell me, therefore, to what category the soul belongs – to the category of the Absolute Self, or to that of the changing objects of the world? If the *Jiva* belongs to the world, then how is it possible to lead it beyond the world? But if the *Jiva* belongs to the realm of the Absolute, how can the ocean be led across the ocean?

Sri Vasistha replied: Oh *Rama*, if one thinks that the Self has actually fallen into the state of *Jivahood* (in the form of the numerous souls), then in spite of whatever intellectual knowledge he might have pertaining to the scriptures, he is practically ignorant.

This *Jiva* belongs to the realm of the world-process. By knowing the *Jiva*, one does not attain Liberation. But by discovering the underlying reality of the *Jiva* (*Brahman*), one attains the cessation of all miseries.

Sri Rama requested: Oh Sage, please tell me the nature of the Absolute, knowing which, one attains freedom from all mental illusions.

Sri Vasistha continued: The objects of the world are perceived by the thought-waves of the mind. Due to ignorance, the soul, being identified with the mind, continues to drift from one thought-wave to another. If it were to dive into the ocean of Consciousness without drifting from wave to wave — if it were to seek that which is in between the rising and the falling of the waves, then it would attain Enlightenment.

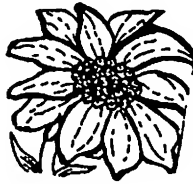
The Self is like a great ocean of Consciousness wherein the world exists only as waves of illusion. In *Brahman*, the world of seer, seen and sight, though apparently existing, ceases to be. He is not the ether, but is described as the ether because He is without limitations.

Though devoid of names and forms, the Self appears to manifest through different objects. Though subtle and imperceptible, yet the Self appears like solid rocks to the eyes of the ignorant.

Just as emptiness coexists with the sky, and luminosity with light, so the world coexists with the Self. In fact, the world is an illusion sustained but also transcended by the Self.

An intellect that is tainted by the reality of the world is unable to reflect the transcendental nature of the Self. But when it is free from the illusion of the world, it reflects *Brahman* without any distortion. This is the intuitional vision which enables the soul to realize *Brahman*.

It is impossible to attain Liberation without fully understanding the illusoriness of the world-process.



Section 8 – *The Glory of Spiritual Scriptures*

Sri Rama asked: Oh Sage, how can this vast universe be accepted as illusory or unreal? How can you say that this enormous physical world abides in *Brahman* who is subtle and beyond the reach of the senses and mind? How can a mustard seed become the basis of an illusory projection of the Himalayan Mountains?

Sri Vasistha said: Oh *Rama*, listen to my teachings with patience. As a result of sustained good association and study of scriptures, you will gain that insight which will remove the illusion of the world-process within a moment.

As long as there is the reality of the visible world, so long there is a "seer." And as long as there is a "seer," there has to be the world which is "seen." If the "seen" is proven false, then the "seer" too will dissolve into unreality. Or if the "seer" (the individual soul) is discovered as a mere reflection of the Self in the stream of intellect, then the "seen" is bound to disappear from one's view.

The awareness that the world does not exist in the three periods of time will enable you to free the mirror of your mind from all its impurities such as egoism, attachment, and the manifold defects of the mind. When you realize that these impurities do not even exist, you will have no difficulty in wiping the mirror of mind clean of all blemishes.

If you desire any object intensely, you are bound to realize it if you do not slacken your effort until it is attained. In the same way, if you sincerely aspire to attain Self-realization, you will succeed if you do not interrupt your spiritual quest.

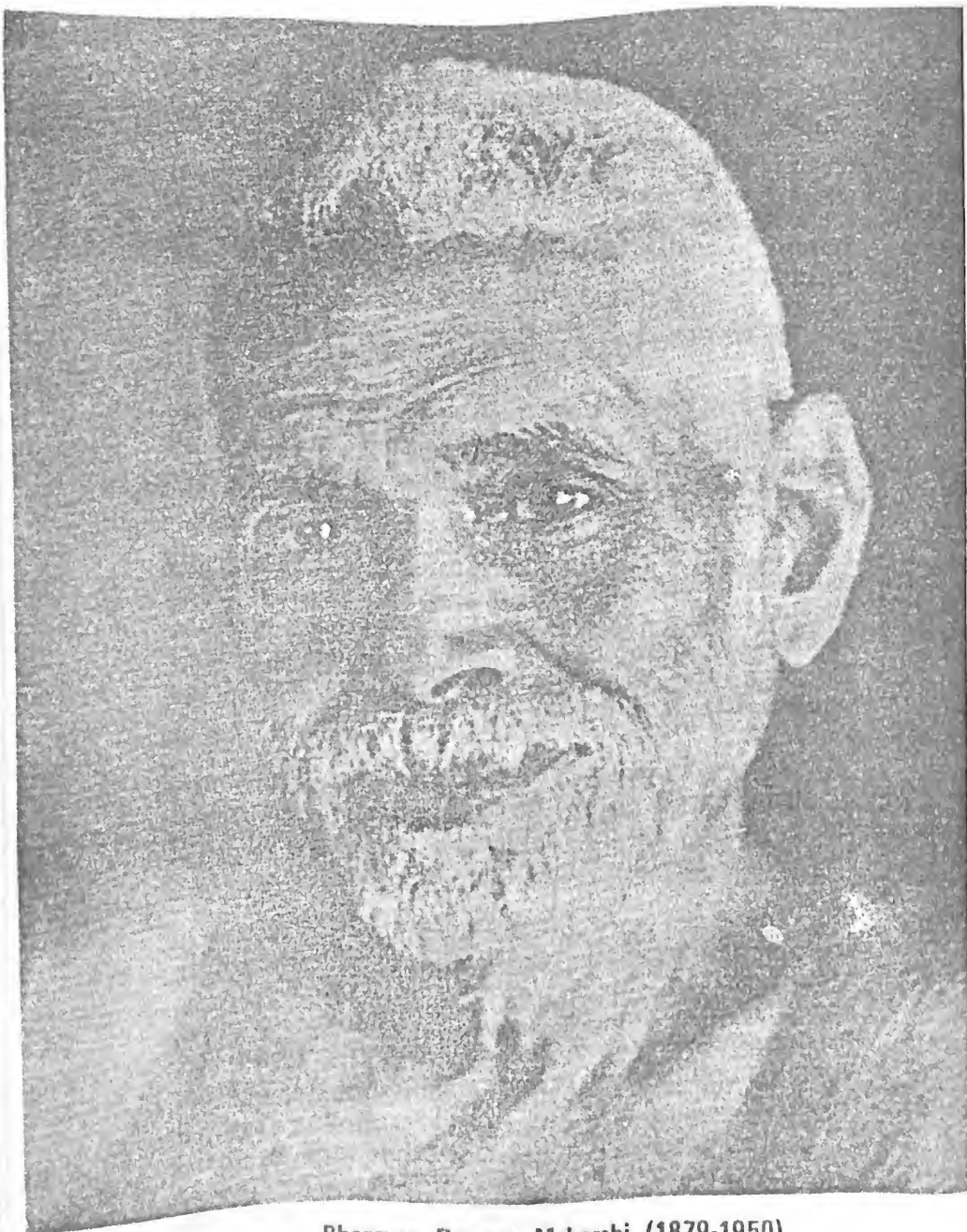
If you are devoted to good association and study of scriptures with an uninterrupted concentration, you will attain realization in a few months, nay even in a few days.

Among the various scriptures that deal with the nature of Self, the present scripture which is being taught to you (*Yoga Vasistha*, also known as *Maha Ramayana*) is the best. It contains the essence of all the scriptures that deal with *Brahman*, and of the path that leads to Liberation.

If one is inclined to study any other scripture, he may indeed do so. But of course, it is beneficial for a person to take advantage of this unparalleled treasure of wisdom which is spread before him.

Just as a very potent medicine is effective in removing disease, so this scripture is effective in removing the disease of the world-process. The benefits that you will gain by listening to these teachings will far excel the benefits gained by pursuing numerous religious rites led by egoistic illusions.





Bhagavan Ramana Maharshi (1879-1950)

Section 9 – *The Characteristics
of a Liberated Sage*

Sage *Vasistha* continued: One who is ceaselessly devoted to *Brahman*, who exists for the sake of the Self, who rejoices in talking about *Brahman*, and who is engaged in enlightening others about their essential nature, he attains Liberation even in this life.

Sri Rama asked: Oh Sage please explain to me the difference between a *Jivan Mukta* (one liberated in life) and a *Videha Mukta* (one liberated after death), so that I may develop intuitional vision that is taught in the scriptures.

Sri Vasistha explained: One who continues to abide in the Self even while engaged in actions that are in accord with the scriptures, who views the world as a reflection in the placid lake of Consciousness, as an illusory projection, he is a *Jivan Mukta* (one liberated in life).

Though active and cheerful in daily life, yet he is rooted in the realization that he does not perform or enjoy any action. He is essentially the Divine Self. His face does not bloom with joy during prosperity, nor does it wither with the cold frost of adversity. He is ever contented with whatever he receives in accordance with his fructifying Karmas from the past.

He sleeps peacefully in the Self, yet is ever awake, having conquered the sleep of ignorance. The normal waking state of consciousness characterized by the perceptions of the senses and mind, has been negated by his intuitional vision. Therefore, he is no longer "awake" to the world.

He maintains the practical realities of the world by expressing apparent attachment, concern, like and dislike, even as a skilled actor must play his part dispassionately. In reality, he abides in the Self that is free from all modifications and changes.

One who has no egoism, and who develops neither the sense of doership towards the performance of actions nor the sense of non-doership towards the non-performance of actions, he is a liberated Sage.

Having removed the veil of ignorance, he is able to see the three worlds both arising from the Self and being negated by the Self. He is ever balanced in his inward vision of the Self.

One who does not cause fear in others, and in whom others do not cause fear, who is unaffected by the conditions that would normally cause joy, anger, and fear, he is a *Jivan Mukta* (a liberated Sage).

Having discovered the Self as the basis of the objects that cause attachment in the ignorant, a Sage is free of all attachments. The fever of attachment does not torment his mind.

When the wind subsides, the same air creates a normal atmosphere. In the same way, when the body is discarded, a *Jivan Mukta* becomes a *Videha Mukta* automatically. *Jivan Mukti* is Liberation in life, while *Videha Mukti* is the same state when the body is discarded.

A liberated Sage sees the illusoriness in the objects of the world. Therefore, though appearing

to possess a body from the point of the ignorant, he really has no body; and though appearing to have a mind, he is far beyond the mind.

Having attained *Videha Mukti* (Liberation without the body), he does not suffer from birth and death. There is no rising and setting of his Consciousness. He goes beyond all the limited concepts of the mind. He is neither manifest nor nonmanifest, neither near nor far, neither peaceful nor agitated.

He becomes the sun and bathes the earth with light and warmth. He becomes Lord *Vishnu* and sustains the world. Having become *Brahma*, he creates the world; assuming the form of *Shiva*, he destroys it. Adopting the form of the sky (the ether element), he sustains the winds, and gives spaciousness to all living beings.

He becomes the earth, and sustains all living beings. He manifests through the creepers, bushes and trees, and gives rise to numerous fruits for all living beings. He becomes water, the giver of life, as well as fire that is all-consuming. He rains nectar, since he has become the moon. But he also produces virulent poison that destroys all.

He becomes the light that reveals the directions, as well as the darkness that engulfs all manifested objects in the ocean of obscurity. He becomes void in the form of the sky. And he becomes invincible, having taken the form of the mountains standing against the raging winds.

Sri Rama asked: Oh Sage, if he becomes all that is in this world, how is it that he is not worldly? How is it that he does not fall a prey to the wheel of birth and death?

Sri Vasistha explained: If the world were a reality, a Sage would become worldly after identifying himself with the entire world. But, Oh *Rama*, this world is unreal. To say that a Sage is aware of becoming all this is only a figurative expression of his inward fullness.

Is there any real difference between various golden ornaments? Don't they have the same basic reality (gold)? Are the waves in any way different from the ocean? Can air in motion (wind) be essentially different from the still air? In the same way, the world is not different from the Self.

When the created universe is withdrawn during *Pralaya* (the great universal deluge), the Self alone exists. That Self is beyond all mental concepts. It is called *Sat* (Absolute Existence) from a symbolic point of view. In fact, It is neither light nor darkness, neither seen nor unseen, neither existence nor nonexistence.

It is fuller of fullness than fullness itself. It is pure Consciousness, infinite, eternal, without beginning or end, causeless and free of all modifications. It is devoid of eyes, ears, hands, feet, and all the senses and limbs that belong to an embodied soul.

The Self into which the world dissolves during *Pralaya* exists as the innermost reality in every human being. The Light that illumines the mind of a person is infinitely more luminous than the sun. It is by the Light of the indwelling Self that the sun shines, and universes manifest like mirages in desert sands.

The three worlds are nothing but the same Self in a state of vibration. When the mystic vibration subsides, the Self abides in Its essential nature, devoid of the three worlds. Both the manifestation and the dissolution of the world are but mere sports of the Self. In fact, the Self is Non-dual, Perfect, and Absolute.

Though devoid of speech, the Self is the source of all eloquence. Though without the mind, the Self is the only Thinker. Though ever satisfied, it is the Self that enjoys various objects through various living beings. Though beyond all actions, it is the Self that performs all actions through the instrumentality of the minds and senses of innumerable personalities.

When the Self is not known, there manifest the illusory snakes of the world-process. But when the Self is known, all the illusions vanish. The Self that I discover as the basis of my being, is also discovered by you as the basis of your being. In fact, the Self is neither "I" nor "you" nor "they."

Oh *Rama*, all the objects of the world are essentially the Self. The very mind with the help of which you know the objects of the world is essentially the Self. The Reality that underlies the triad of "seer, seen and sight" is the Self.

Section 10 – *The Paradoxical
Descriptions of Brahman*

Sri Rama asked: Oh Sage, how is it that the *Sat* (Pure Existence) that remains during the dissolution of the world-process cannot be described as mere void? How is it that this Absolute Existence cannot be described as light or as darkness? In what way is the Self different from the individual soul? Why can It not be identified with the intellect?

Sri Vasistha explained: Dear *Rama*, just as the sun dispels darkness, so I will dispel your doubts with the light of wisdom. First I will explain to you why the Pure Existence of the Self cannot be described as void.

A marble rock contains within it the statue that an artist is able to create by the process of cutting and chiseling. In the same way, the world evolves out of *Brahman*. You cannot describe the marble rock as devoid of statues, nor can you describe it as full of statues. In the same way, *Brahman* cannot be described as devoid of the world-process, nor can He be described as coexistent with the world-process.

A wave that has subsided in a serene lake has neither existence nor nonexistence. You cannot say that a world that has merged in *Brahman* (through destruction) does not exist, nor can you say that it does exist. Therefore, the world is the product of indescribable Maya (cosmic illusion).

You may object that different forms are hewn out of a rock by an artist with the help of various instruments; but how can the world be evolved out of *Brahman* in the absence of material instruments such as time, space, and the various material objects?

In fact, from the point of view of Absolute Truth, this world does not arise from *Brahman*, nor does it subside in *Brahman*. The world is illusory, like a dream. Its appearance and disappearance are real only with relation to the illusory mind of the individual.

“Void” and “not void” are relative terms sustained by the concepts of the mind. *Brahman* is beyond the reach of the mind. Therefore, He cannot be described with “is” or “is not.”

It is the Light of *Brahman* unfolding Itself through the intuitive intellect that brings forth the revelation of *Brahman*. It is *Brahman* who attains realization of *Brahman* by His own Light!

Though *Brahman* is an inexhaustible treasure containing the wealth of innumerable worlds, yet *Brahman* is as pure as the heart of the sky.

Earthen pots exist in a potter's clay, and a pungent, hot taste exists in hot chilli. In the same way, the world exists in *Brahman*. The external objects of the senses, as well as the internal perceptions of the mind are essentially *Brahman*.

It is *Brahman* who manifests in the three states of consciousness – waking, dream and deep sleep. At the same time, however, He ever abides in His transcendental glory. Just as mighty waves exist in a latent form in a quiet ocean, so numerous worlds exist latent in *Brahman*. It is from the fullness of *Brahman* that the soul (which remains essentially full) arises with apparent limitations. When the limitations born of ignorance are removed by wisdom, the soul discovers its essential fullness, and becomes one with the Absolute.

The world too proceeds from the fullness of the Self. Therefore, it is essentially full. How can anything but fullness proceed from that which is full? In fact, this illusory world is always *Brahman*, the embodiment of fullness. When all illusion is removed, what remains is the fullness of the Absolute.

When the mirror is removed, there is no reflection. In the same way, when the mind is removed, there is the cessation of the reflected Self (the *Jiva*) and the realization of the Supreme Self.

The concepts of size and shape apply to the soul, but not to the Self. That Self is subtler than an atom, and purer than the clear blue sky. It cannot be limited by time, space and causation. There is neither beginning, nor middle, nor end of this Supreme Reality.

The Pure Self exists without the functions of intellect, mind, senses, and subtle desires. It is unaffected by the illusions of birth and death.

During *Nirvikalpa Samadhi*, the world does not exist. With the cessation of the "seen" (the world-process), the "seer" too ceases to exist. The triads ("seer, seen and sight," and "knower, known and knowledge") do not exist in *Brahman*.

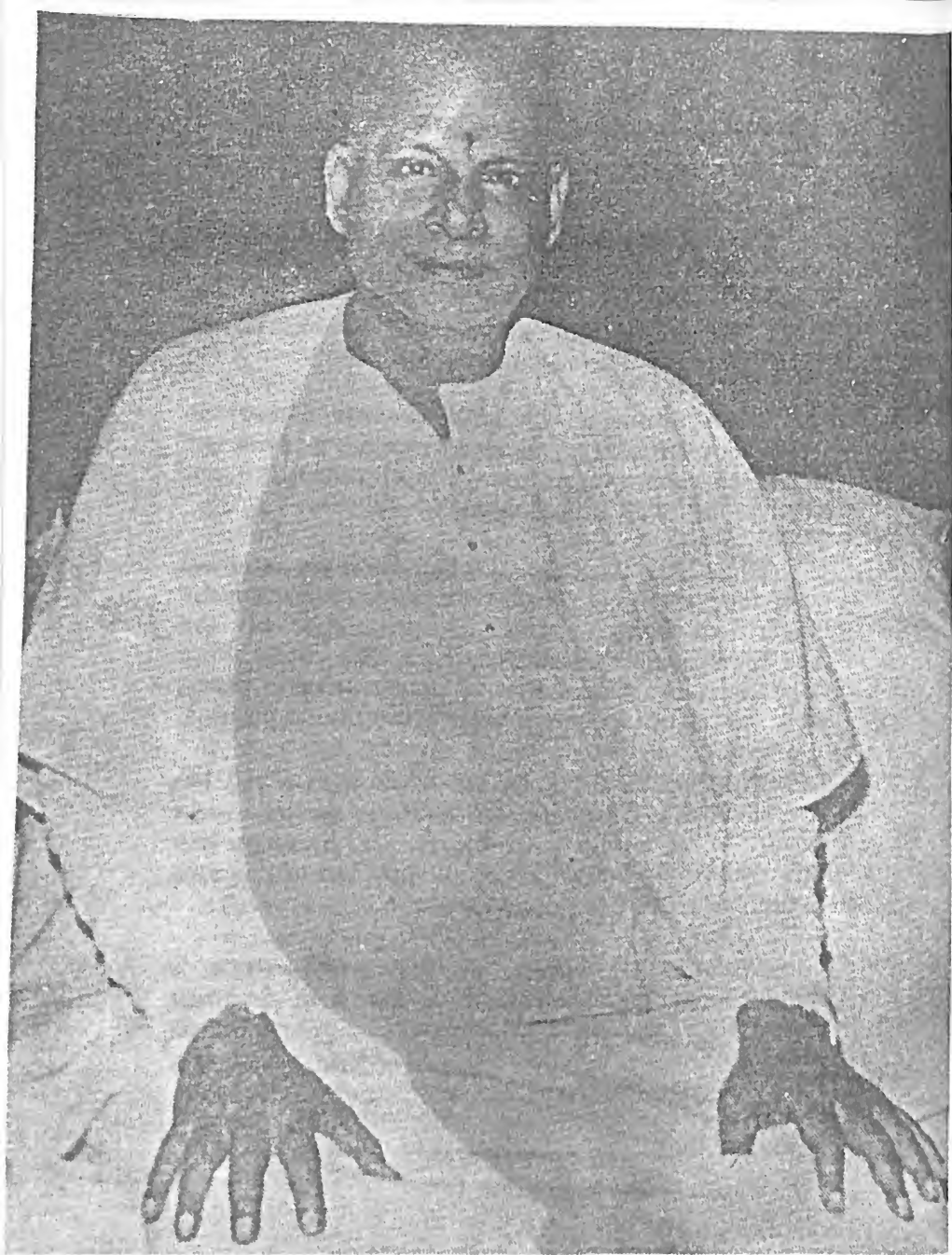
The *Jiva*-consciousness that exists during the absence of *Nirvikalpa Samadhi* subsides in *Brahman* during *Nirvikalpa Samadhi*. In fact, all this is pure, taintless, homogenous *Brahman*.

When the illusions of objectivity are removed from the perceiving *Chitta* (the total mind), then the objectified consciousness in the form of the world-process becomes resolved into Pure Consciousness. *Chitta* devoid of the triad of "seer, seen and sight" becomes *Chit* (Pure Consciousness).

That which illumines the three bodies and the five sheaths is *Brahman*. He abides in the innermost depths of all beings and objects. And he surges like the ocean when disturbed by the numerous thought-waves of the mind.

When the illusion of the world-process is removed by the realization of the Self, *Brahman* shines forth in His essential glory - devoid of the world-process, Pure Consciousness, Existence, Knowledge and Bliss.





H.H. Swami Sivanandaji Maharaj

Section 11 — *The World as a Mental Illusion*

Sri Rama asked: Oh Sage, if this world consisting of numerous planes and innumerable beings does not exist in *Brahman*, then where does it exist during *Pralaya* (the cosmic deluge)?

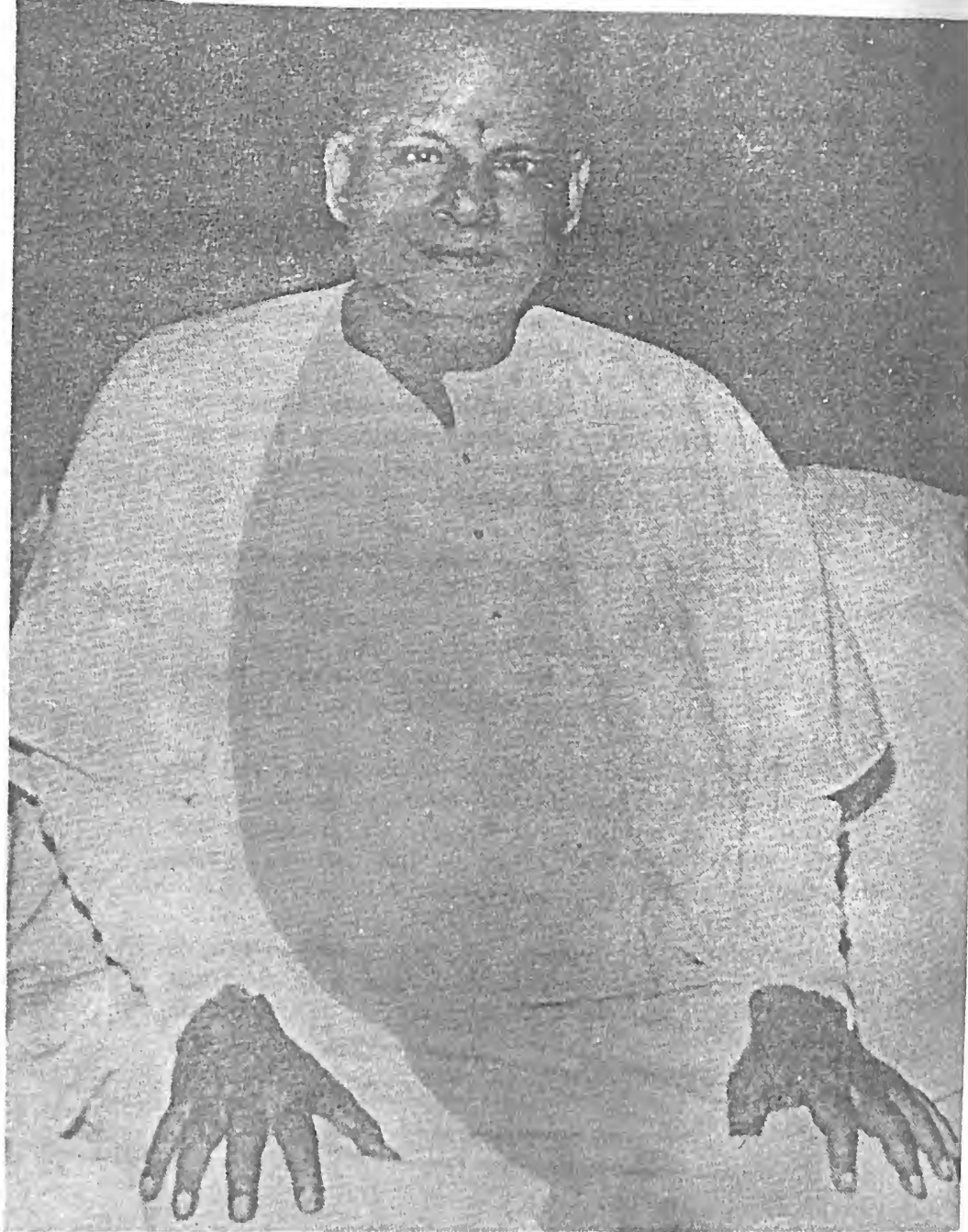
Sri Vasistha replied: Oh *Rama*, tell me where does the son of a barren woman come from? How long does he exist, and where does he go? Or tell me, how can there be a past, present and future for a forest in the sky? (*The world exists on the basis of mental illusion only. When the illusion is removed, the world is discovered as Brahman.*)

Sri Rama answered: Oh Sage, the son of a barren woman does not exist even at the present moment. He never existed, and never will exist in the future. But the reality of the world is sustained by the proof of our direct perceptions.

Sri Vasistha said: Oh *Rama*, in spite of the fact that the senses perceive the world as real, the Absolute alone exists. In spite of perceiving a piece of gold as a necklace, the latter is only in name; the gold alone exists.

A mirage appears to be different from the desert, but is in reality the same as the desert. Even so, this world, though appearing different from *Brahman*, is in fact, *Brahman* only.

During dream, the same Consciousness which sustains the realities of the waking world becomes modified into dream phenomena. Just as dream objects are nothing but Consciousness, so all waking realities are also nothing but Consciousness.



H.H. Swami Sivanandaji Maharaj

Section 11 – *The World as a Mental Illusion*

Sri Rama asked: Oh Sage, if this world consisting of numerous planes and innumerable beings does not exist in *Brahman*, then where does it exist during *Pralaya* (the cosmic deluge)?

Sri Vasistha replied: Oh *Rama*, tell me where does the son of a barren woman come from? How long does he exist, and where does he go? Or tell me, how can there be a past, present and future for a forest in the sky? (*The world exists on the basis of mental illusion only. When the illusion is removed, the world is discovered as Brahman.*)

Sri Rama answered: Oh Sage, the son of a barren woman does not exist even at the present moment. He never existed, and never will exist in the future. But the reality of the world is sustained by the proof of our direct perceptions.

Sri Vasistha said: Oh *Rama*, in spite of the fact that the senses perceive the world as real, the Absolute alone exists. In spite of perceiving a piece of gold as a necklace, the latter is only in name; the gold alone exists.

A mirage appears to be different from the desert, but is in reality the same as the desert. Even so, this world, though appearing different from *Brahman*, is in fact, *Brahman* only.

During dream, the same Consciousness which sustains the realities of the waking world becomes modified into dream phenomena. Just as dream objects are nothing but Consciousness, so all waking realities are also nothing but Consciousness.

All that is seen as “the world” is ever established in the Self. From the point of view of intuitional revelation, nothing is born, nothing dies, nothing comes into existence, and nothing ever ceases to be.

Sri Rama asked: Oh Sage, if this world is as illusory as a dream, then why does it seem to exist as a solid reality until the period of *Pralaya* (the cosmic deluge)? Why is it that we do not find dream-like disorderliness in the operations of the world?

Sri Vasistha replied: I will answer your questions with the help of stories and illustrations that explain how this world is nonexistent. Although nonexistent, it appears real. In this respect, it is similar to dream. But, being more intensely rooted in the mind (*Manas*), it is not as disorganized and confused as a dream. The mind has intensified its impressions of the illusory world over a long period of time.

Section 12 – The Creation of the Universe

Sri Vasistha continued: Oh *Rama*, listen and I will tell you how this entire universe proceeded from the Absolute *Brahman*, who is supremely peaceful, immutable and eternal.

Consciousness is pure like the taintless sky. However, there arises a subtle inclination towards objectivity. This is described as the Will of the Supreme Being to create the universe, and is due to *Maya* (cosmic illusion).

Tinged with this will for externalization, Pure Consciousness assumes the role of *Brahma*, the Creator. And with repeated intensification of the

tendency towards externalization, the same limitless Self assumes the form of incarnating souls (*Jivas*) caught in the wheel of birth and death.

Corresponding with the relativity of *Jiva* Consciousness, the Supreme Self simultaneously assumes the form of ether element. With increasing externalization, there develops the reality of time and egoism.

Pursuing the desires of the ego, the soul becomes identified with the ether element, as well as with its products: air, fire, water, and earth. With the awakening of the will, "may I be ether, air, fire, water, or earth," the Self becomes all these.

Just as the mighty banyan tree remains enclosed in a small seed, so this vast universe remains latent in the unmanifest *Akasha* (ether, or Nature) which emanates from the Absolute.

The subtle elements give rise to gross elements. But in fact, the gross elements are merely appearances of the subtle elements. There is no actual change or modification in the subtle elements. It is the limitation of the human mind that interprets the subtle elements as the gross elements constituting the manifold realities of the world.



Section 13 – *Brahman Becomes
the Jiva (Individual Soul) Through Illusion*

Sri Vasistha continued: Just as the dream world arises even without one's willing it to, so this world-process arises in *Brahman*. Like trees that grow and die in a vast forest, so the worlds arise and are destroyed in the great forest of Pure Consciousness.

This world-tree arises without any seed. It is sustained by illusion. Just as the objects in dream arise without any tangible basis, so this world arises out of ignorance.

The five subtle elements that arise out of *Brahman* are of the nature of *Brahman*. The objects that arise out of the five elements are also of the nature of *Brahman*. In fact, this entire universe is nothing but *Brahman*.

Cities that arise in dream, or in the imaginations of the mind, are false, yet they are perceptible during the state of illusion. In the same way, this world is false, yet "real" due to ignorance.

It is *Brahman* (the Absolute) that has assumed the role of *Jiva* (the individual soul). Just as a blazing conflagration may identify itself with a single spark that arises from it, so *Brahman* identifies Himself with the individual soul.

The subtle elements that arise out of *Brahman* do not give up their subtlety when they are modified into gross elements. The grossness seen in the subtle elements is due to the illusions of the human mind.

The mind, by its repeated erroneous perception, creates the idea that the world is real, that the objects are gross, that the names and forms are distinct from the Divine Self.

Just as one might become a wandering traveller in a dream, so the soul has become an incarnating entity in the long dream of the world-process. Led by the desire to see, the spirit in man projects the sense of vision. And similarly, led by the desire to hear, touch, taste and smell, the spirit projects the appropriate senses.

The “body” consisting of mind and senses is very subtle. However, by intensifying mental illusion, this subtle body is interpreted as the gross body. Now confined to the gross body, the soul finds itself caught in a world of time and space. But just as a dream exists within the being of a person, so the world exists within the being of the Self.

This world is nothing but Pure Consciousness. All this is *Brahman* who is peaceful, supportless, non-dual, and void of all multiplicity. It is *Brahman* who expands within Himself in the form of the universe. Just as a whirlpool arises in water, so the world arises in *Brahman* and exists as *Brahman*.

A person might see his own death during a dream; but on waking, he realizes the falsity of that dream vision. In the same way, the death of the body, as well as the destruction of the world at the time of *Pralaya* (the great deluge), are realized as false from the point of view of intuitive vision. When *Brahman* alone is, how can there be the creation or destruction of the world?

Section 14 – *It Is Brahman
That Manifests as the Universe*

Sri Vasistha continued: Oh *Rama*, I have been explaining to you that this world consisting of one's ego and its ramifications does not exist, because it did not arise from *Brahman*. Just as ripples and waves are nothing but the ocean, so the world is nothing but the Absolute Self.

Mountains might be seen in a dream, but on waking, they melt into nothingness. Much in the same way, the mountainous realities of human life are nonexistent when a person wakes up to the intuitive vision of the Self.

Brahma created this universe without a Karmic continuity from the last cycle of creation. All *Brahmas* (Creators) are said to attain Liberation at the time of universal dissolution (*Maha Pralaya*). And at the commencement of creation, a new *Brahma* projects this world-process even as a magician projects illusions.

Brahma is essentially the Cosmic Mind (*Hiranyagarbha*) that manifests as a wave in the Absolute Self. This *Hiranyagarbha* assumes the form of *Virat* (the Cosmic Being that identifies itself with the physical universe). In fact, *Brahman* alone exists through these illusory modifications.

Sri Rama asked: Oh Sage, is there only one individual soul (*Jiva*) or are there many souls? Or are there many souls joined together composing the body of the Cosmic Being?

Sri Vasistha explained: Oh *Rama*, there is neither one individual soul nor many souls. *Brahman* is the transcendental, non-dual, eternal Reality. Just as raindrops proceed from a cloud, or sprays of water from the dashing waves of the ocean, so the illusory souls proceed from the Absolute. In fact, they do not exist separated from the Absolute.

Brahman appears as the soul as well as the universe. The Reality behind every soul is the Reality behind the universe. When illusions are removed, a person discovers his inner identity with all that is, and realizes *Brahman* as the only Reality. All this is nothing but *Brahman*, who is the pure, all-pervading, taintless mass of consciousness.

When *Brahman* becomes involved in desires for objects, He becomes a *Jiva* (individual soul). But when the *Jiva* abandons desire, it becomes *Brahman*. This world is the miraculous manifestation of the Self.

Mind, intellect, ego, the five elements, the mountains, the directions, and all that is this universe, is nothing but the Self.

Pure Consciousness creates the illusion of the ego. The ego, in turn, becomes intensified into the form of the mind, the senses, and the various elements which constitute the world. But just as ripples and waves are one with the ocean, or breezes and storms are one with the air, so the world is one with the Absolute.

Moonlight is a sportive expression of the fullness of the moon. Therefore, it is not different from the moon. In the same way, this world is like Light emanating from the Moon of *Brahman*. It is not different from *Brahman*.

There are apparent differences between ego and *Prana*. Ego abounds more with awareness, while *Prana* is characterized by activity. However, both are different vibrations of the same Pure Consciousness.

Consciousness involved in *Prana* assumes the role of a *Jiva* (individual soul). This involvement is illusory and is sustained by ignorance. The same Consciousness manifests as the universe. Therefore, every *Jiva* is the same as the Universe.

When intuitional knowledge of the Absolute arises, one discovers oneself as *Brahman*. He realizes, "I am the Self that cannot be pierced, that cannot be dried up, and cannot be consumed by fire. I am all-pervading, immutable *Atman*."

While the ignorant abide in illusion, and continue to create illusion in others' minds with their endless talks and discussions, the enlightened Sages have no need to waste their vocal energy. They are aware of the Truth, even as a man with eyes is aware of the existence of the blazing sun.

From the point of view of the intuitive vision, this world is nothing but *Brahman*. Devoid of *Brahman*, this world has no existence at all. This world is a wave in the ocean of Consciousness, a golden bangle of which gold is the only Reality, a

flame of which fire is the only Truth, a sugar candy of which sugar is the only Essence, or the coolness of ice, which is nothing but ice.

As the Sage continued his teachings, the day declined. It was the time of sunset. Therefore, directed by Sage *Vasistha*, the assembly of Sages, saints, and seekers of spiritual wisdom retired to their homes for the performance of their daily duties. When the night elapsed and the sun shone again in the eastern horizon, they reassembled in the royal court of King *Dasharatha*, desirous of listening to more of the nectarine teachings of Sage *Vasistha*.



*Read *THE WAY TO LIBERATION*
by Swami Jyotir Maya Nanda

Section 15 – *The Story of Lila Commences*

Sri Vasistha continued: Oh *Rama*, just as a statue exists in a marble rock before it is carved, so this world exists in *Brahman*. Or just as a wave is nothing but the ocean, so this world is nothing but *Brahman*, the Absolute.

The particles of dust that scintillate in a beam of light coming through a slit in a window into a dark room are indeed subtle compared to the mountains. Much in the same way, the Self is subtle compared to the world-process. In fact, the Self is even subtler than atoms.

The objects seen in a dream are not as concrete as the objects of waking state. In the same way, this world-process disappears like the contents of a dream when one enters into the state of intuitional vision of the Self.

Dream disappears, leaving behind a relatively pure consciousness. So too, this world disappears in the state of enlightenment, and what is left is absolutely Pure Consciousness. To illustrate this fact, I will tell you "The Story of *Mandapakhyana*," "the world existing in the corner of a house," also known as "The Story of *Lila*."

Sri Rama said: Oh venerable Guru, please tell me "The Story of *Lila*." I am eager to attain Self-realization, and with the help of this story, you will give me a deep understanding of the Divine Self.

Sri Vasistha said: Oh *Rama*, long long ago, there lived a king known as *Padma*. His name meant "lotus," and he was a veritable lotus delighting the

hearts of his subjects. He was exceedingly righteous and endowed with excellent qualities.

He was a valiant hero in battle. Like the fierce rays of the sun, he used to scatter his enemies. Just as *Manasa Lake* in the Himalayas is the abode of swans, so too he was an abode of all excellent qualities such as charity, generosity, compassion, and manifold other aspects of goodness.

His wife, *Lila*, was equally endowed with excellent virtues. Beautiful and charming in her appearance, she was even more beautiful in her inner life. She had wonderful qualities, like a beautiful vine in the spring season laden with blooms. Sparkling like the Ganges' waters, she sported like the swans that soar in the vastness of the blue sky.

A crest jewel among ideal women, she was deeply devoted to her husband. She was joyous in his joys and sorrowful in his miseries. She followed the King like his reflection, but with only one exception – when the King was angry, she did not show anger, but awaited with patience for the waves of agitation in his heart to subside.

Section 16 – *There is a Tragic End
to the Enjoyments of this World*

Sri Vasistha continued: King *Padma* and his beautiful Queen *Lila* pursued the pleasures of the world with profound mutual love. There was not a tinge of artificiality in their loving relationship. They sported in gardens, by lakes adorned with blooming lotuses, in green valleys, and by the banks of rivers, they listened to the stories of villagers, entertained



Lila recieves blessing from Goddess Saraswati

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themselves by listening to the devotional stories of the *Puranas*, ate delicious foods, played amusing games, decked themselves with beautiful ornaments, and spent their youthful days pursuing the varied joys of life.

Time passed rapidly. *Lila* became aware of the fact that one day, their youthfulness would come to an end, and they would fall prey to old age and death. She wanted to find a method by which she could avert death for her husband, and thus secure immortality for him.

Queen *Lila* consulted the *Brahmins* who told her about various psychic powers that develop as a result of *Japa* (repetition of *Mantra*), *Tapa* (austerity), *Yamas* (restraints) and *Niyamas* (observances), but that it is impossible to secure immortality on this earth.

Hearing this, she became aware of the pathetic end that had to come to their excellent joys. She thought to herself, if I were to die before my husband, I would abide in the Self and be free from all the sufferings of life. But if my husband dies before me, at least I will try to secure a residence for his soul here in our own palace. Thus, I would enjoy a perpetual proximity with him. Therefore, let me worship Goddess *Saraswati* and secure my desire.

Having resolved this in her mind, Queen *Lila* practised austerity and devotion to secure the favor of Goddess *Saraswati*, the Goddess who is the very embodiment of wisdom. She kept all this secret from her husband.

She practiced various forms of spiritual disciplines such as fasting, serving her Guru and other spiritually enlightened people, bathing in holy waters, giving wealth in charity, and intense meditation. In spite of her spiritual disciplines, she did not neglect, even in the least, her duties towards her husband.

As time passed, Goddess *Saraswati*, pleased with *Lila's* austerities, appeared before her in order to shower Her Grace.

Goddess *Saraswati* asked: Oh Child, I am immensely pleased with the austerities you performed as an expression of your love for your husband. Please ask any boon that you desire.

Queen *Lila* asked: Oh Goddess, you are the blazing fire that dispels the darkness of age and death. You are the Mother of the Universe. I am a suppliant at your lotus feet. Please protect me. Please grant me two boons: First, if my husband dies before me, let his soul stay in this palace; and for my second boon, whenever I pray to behold Your divine form, may You appear before me.

Goddess *Saraswati* said, "May it be so," and disappeared like a wave that subsides in the vast ocean. The joys of Queen *Lila* knew no bounds.

Time revolves like a wheel. Months and fortnights form the circumference of the wheel. The seasons are the circle close to the axle. Every moment is the hub of this wheel. The days and nights are the spokes, while the year is the axle on which the wheel revolves. Thus, as this wheel continued revolving,

seconds became minutes, and minutes hours, and hours turned into days, and days became months. This paved the way for the passage of years, until King *Padma* came close to his physical end.

Wounded in a battle, King *Padma* was brought into the palace, where he died. Queen *Lila* was grief-stricken. She was like a withering lotus deprived of the life-sustaining water of a lake. She writhed in agony like a wounded deer.

Section 17 – *The Spirit of King Padma Enjoys a Different World and Becomes King Viduratha*

While *Lila* was immersed in grief, Goddess *Saraswati* spoke, but kept Herself invisible, like a voice proceeding from the sky:

Oh Child, keep the dead body of your husband carefully covered under flowers. You will eventually find your husband. These flowers will not wither, and the dead body will not decay. It will come back to life in a short while. In the meantime, his spirit will continue to dwell in the palace.

Having heard this divine voice, *Lila* felt a ray of hope. Just as a withering lotus is delighted with a shower of rain, so she felt delighted at the words of the Goddess. She covered the body of the King under flowers, and during the following night, she invoked the presence of the Goddess.

Goddess *Saraswati* appeared and asked: Oh *Lila*, why have you remembered me? This world-process is as illusory as the contents of your dream.

Lila asked: Oh Goddess, where is my husband now? What is he doing, and how is he? Please take me to him; I cannot live without him.

Goddess **Saraswati** said: Oh beautiful **Lila**, first become acquainted with the fact that there are three types of ether (*Akasha*): 1) *Chittakasa* – the ether of the heart (mind-stuff), 2) *Chidakasha* – the ether of consciousness, and 3) *Bhutakasha* – the physical ether. *Chidakasha* (the ether of consciousness) is completely devoid of mental and physical ether. Veiled by ignorance, it is *Chidakasha* that affords different planes of existence to the wandering souls. Therefore, by meditating upon *Chidakasha*, you will be led to the world of your husband's spirit. This world, just like your world, is imagined. It is like a projection on the screen of *Chidakasha*.

Therefore, focus your mind on that consciousness within you by renouncing all other thoughts. By doing so, you will soon be led to the plane of your husband's spirit. Thus saying, Goddess **Saraswati** disappeared.

Sri Vasistha continued: Oh **Rama**, **Lila** then entered into deep *Samadhi*. By the Grace of Goddess **Saraswati**, she flew like a bird, leaving her physical body behind. She penetrated the very *Akasha* of her own room and discovered another world where she saw her husband manifesting as a different personality.

Even within the space of her own room, **Lila** found herself in a different world where her husband, now known as King *Viduratha*, was a young king. He was seated on a throne in the midst of royal glories, and was attended upon by numerous counselors, ministers and ambassadors from different countries.

Just like mist entering into a room, *Lila* entered into the royal court. To her great surprise, she found that the king was sixteen years old and was without a tinge of the age or fatigue of his previous existence as *Padma*. The world he lived in was as real as any world could be. She also saw the ministers and subjects of his previous existence abiding in his world. This created confusion in *Lila's* mind. She thought within herself, "Is it possible that all the people from the Kingdom of *Padma* have been transported into the Kingdom of *Viduratha*?"

Lila rushed back to her world, entered into her body, and rose from the state of *Samadhi*. Then she hastened to awaken her friends and summoned all her ministers and attendants right then in the middle of the night. Soon the royal court was lit up by torches, and all the attendants and royal officers were present before her. Saying that she just wanted to console her afflicted mind by their presence, she then dismissed them. Joyously she certified that they had not been transported to another world.

Section 18 – Both the World of *Padma* and the World of *Padma's* Spirit, *Viduratha*, Are Illusory

Confounded by having seen two worlds existing at the same time, *Lila* invoked the presence of Goddess *Saraswati* and sought to be enlightened about the mystery of those worlds.

Goddess *Saraswati* explained: Oh Child, which of the worlds do you consider real, and which do you consider unreal? If you consider your world real and *Viduratha's* world unreal, then tell me, what is the cause of *Viduratha's* world? The effect must abide in

the cause. If *Viduratha's* world is the effect of your world, and if you say that the latter is unreal, then you must agree that your world too is unreal.

If you say that *Padma's* memory caused the world that he now experiences as King *Viduratha*, then, since memory is nothing, without any substance of its own, both your world as well as *Viduratha's* have no reality.

Lila asked: Oh Goddess, how did *Viduratha's* world arise out of this world? How can I be free from the delusion of these worlds?

Goddess *Saraswati* explained: Oh *Lila*, this entire world is based upon the memory of the Creator. It is like a dream in the Creator's Mind.

In a corner of Consciousness tinged by ignorance, there lies the Mind of the Creator. In a remote corner of His Mind (Cosmic Mind), there is an old delapidated temple which you know as this world. It is enveloped by the crystal blue expansion of the Self. This temple has many rooms, and each room represents a plane in the cosmos. The sun and moon serve as lamps for this temple. The mountains and valleys are like little pebbles in one room, and some souls are like mosquitoes buzzing in the corners of another room. Every room is filled with numerous objects.

In one corner of this delapidated temple, there is a small pit in which can be found a separate world. In this pit there are rivers, mountains, forests, cities and villages with numerous humans and other living beings. Among them, there is a village called *Parvatgrama* where there once lived a righteous *Brahmin* who owned many milk cows.

Section 19 – *The Story of Vasistha and Arundhati*
(*The Past Lives of Padma and Lila*)

Goddess *Saraswati* continued: The *Brahmin's* name was *Vasistha**. He had a wife called *Arundhati*, and they loved each other profoundly. Once upon a time, the *Brahmin Vasistha* happened to see a King with his army sporting in a forest. He was deeply impressed by the glory of the King.

He thought within himself, "How wonderful it would be to be a king! As a king I would enjoy royal glories. I would be attended by an army of many foot soldiers, horses, elephants, and chariots. I would spread my fame by my righteous acts." This impression continued to linger in his mind even until his death.

The *Brahmin* continued to perform his duties in daily life with an increasing sense of righteousness, and his wife *Arundhati* also lived a life dedicated to service and devotion.

Oh *Lila*, just as you have recently secured a boon from me, so *Arundhati* had once secured a boon. She had also asked that the spirit of her husband should stay confined to her room after his death.

Accordingly, when her husband died, his spirit stayed in the ether of that room in *Parvatgrama*. But *Arundhati* was deeply afflicted by the separation from her husband. Torn by grief, she died, and with her mental body reached her husband's world. Just as a river flows from a higher to a lower level with spontaneity, so she gravitated to the world of *Vasistha's* spirit, and there she bloomed like a flower in spring.

* *Vasistha* in this context is not to be identified with Sage *Vasistha*, the preceptor of Lord *Rama*.

Oh *Lila*, only eight days have elapsed since the *Brahmin* couple died. Their spirits still dwell in *Parvatgrama* in the ether of that room.

Section 20 - *Lila Sees the World of Her Previous Birth*
(*Insight into the Illusory Nature of the World*)

Goddess *Saraswati* continued: Oh beautiful lady, this very *Brahmin Vasistha* became your husband, King *Padma*. You were once *Arundhati*, the beloved wife of that *Brahmin*. With *Vasistha* and *Arundhati* as the root, your universe extends on the basis of illusion. There is creation within creation, even like a dream within a dream. And each creation is real to the experiencing soul, just as a dream is real to the dreamer. Only on waking does the dream become illusory. In the same way, when one receives enlightenment, this world becomes illusory.

Amazed with bewilderment, *Lila* asked: Oh Goddess, your words are bound to be true. But how am I to believe that our vast world is confined to the space of a room in *Parvatgrama*, which in turn is confined to a small pit in the temple of *Brahma's* creation?

Your words, Oh Goddess, are as ridiculous as saying that an elephant has been tied up inside a mustard seed, or that a mosquito waged battle against a group of lions within an atom, or that a mountain exists in a lotus stalk, or that a tiny bee swallowed the highest of mountains, or that a thundering cloud in one's dream delighted the peacocks. I can cite many such illustrations that can never be real. Therefore, please explain to me the secret of your revelation.

Goddess *Saraswati* said: There is nothing false or ridiculous in my statements. Please, listen to me with attention. The soul of *Vasistha*, impressed with the desire to become a king, discovered a world within the space of his dwelling place.

If you ask why it is that you are unable to remember the past, the cause is this. Just as the memory of waking life is lost during dream, and a different form of memory arises, so the memory of the past is lost, and a different form of memory arises in every birth. Death is nothing but a change in the pattern of one's memory.

In fact, Oh gentle *Lila*, this world, including you, Me, and all that you see, is essentially the Ether of Pure Consciousness. This is the Truth that you must realize to end the illusion of the world-process.

In the house of the *Brahmin* there is his soul. Within the ether in his soul exists this vast world consisting of oceans, rivers, forests, mountains, cities and villages. All these creations do not affect the ether of the space in the house of the *Brahmin*, because these are like the illusory forms spiralling in the blue sky seen through eyes that are dazzled by light.

In every atom abides the Self, and that Self can sustain numerous worlds, like particles scintillating in a ray of light. Therefore, Oh *Lila*, why do you wonder about the possibility of a world being sustained by the space in the corner of a room?

Lila asked: Oh Goddess, only eight days have passed since the *Brahmin* couple died, but we have lived in this world for many many years. How can this be possible?

The Goddess replied: Oh beautiful one, just as the perception of spaciousness is illusory, so the perception of time is illusory. This world of time and space is a projection of the mind – an appearance that dissolves in the state of intuitional realization of the Self.

Led by Karma, the soul experiences a state of swoon for a moment, and within that moment it forgets the happenings of the whole past lifetime and begins to see a different form of personality confined to a different set of realities.

The soul becomes identified with a new body, and led by its past impressions, believes: "I am this body with hands, feet, face and limbs. I am the son of my father. This is my wonderful house. I am so many years old. I was born and now I have passed my childhood, and now I am young and youthful. These are my relatives. They were also born like me."

Though the relationships with brother, sister, father, mother, wife and friends are all illusory, yet, due to mutual identification between the *Chitta* (mind) and *Atman* (the Self), they are considered real. In fact, the Self is without body and relationships.

In the perceptions of a dream, both the "seer" and the "seen" are sustained by the Self. On waking, they disappear. In the same way, the world of "seer," "seen," and subject-object relationship is sustained by the Self. When the veil of ignorance is destroyed, duality is negated, and the Self alone remains as the Absolute Reality.

The waves are ever the same as the ocean. The idea that they arise, maintain their individuality, and then subside in the ocean is based upon illusion. In the same way, the world neither arises from *Brahman*, nor is it sustained by *Brahman*, nor does it dissolve in *Brahman*.

When the world of objectivity does not exist, how can there be the duality of “seen” and “seen?” Veiled by the illusion of death, the soul reflects a different pattern of the world – a new time, space, activity, sequence of events, birth, mother, father, brother, relatives, the passage of time, knowledge about objects, desires of the mind, and the rising and setting of the sun.

The Self, though ever unborn, due to its identification with the impure intellect, believes that it is a limited personality. Led by *Vasanas* (subtle desires), It sees Itself born in a particular class, possessing a distinct psychological structure, and involved in certain realities of the world.

Within the moment of (illusory) deviation from the Self, the soul sees itself involved in a flow of sequential events: “I was born of these parents. I grew up and experienced these varied conditions in my life.”

King *Harishchandra* experienced twelve years in a single night when he was afflicted by separation from his beloved wife and son. Men who suffer pangs of separation from their beloved relatives experience a long duration of time in a very short while – a day may seem like a year to them.

A person may dream that he is dead, that he is reborn, and that he has passed through many experiences of pleasure and pain, but on waking, all these become false. In the same way, this world is negated when a person wakes up through intuitional realization of the Self.

Ignorance veils the Truth of the Non-duality of the Self and creates a perverted vision of multiplicity that does not exist. When a person is drunk from having taken alcoholic drinks, or when he is dreaming, he may find a crowd even in a deserted place. He may rejoice even in adverse circumstances or may interpret a great loss as a joyous gain.

This Self sustains all names and forms even as the ocean sustains its waves. When the Self alone exists, how can there be bondage or liberation? Since bondage is not real, the knowledge pertaining to the Self dispels ignorance and reveals the fact that the Self alone is ever established in Its own infinite glory.

• Study *VEDANTA IN BRIEF*
by Swami Jyotir Maya Nanda

**Section 21 – Teachings of Goddess Saraswati
Expounding that All This Is the Pure Self**

Goddess *Saraswati* continued: On opening the eyes, one becomes aware of all the forms. In the same way, after the delusion of death, the soul wakes up to the awareness of the world-process.

Just as a person can see even his own death in a dream, so one sees this during the sleep of ignorance. Memories of things never experienced before become realities in dream. In the same way, the memories that sustain the realities of waking state are also illusory in nature.

It is the *Vasanas* (subtle desires) of the mind that extend themselves in the form of this world consisting of time, space, and causation. The extension of space, the duration of time, and the succession of second, minute, hour, day, week, month, year and age – all this is the projection of *Vasanas* in the mind.

Chitta (mind) is nothing but a bundle of *Vasanas* (subtle desires), and the world is nothing but the projection of the *Vasanas*. Therefore, when the *Vasanas* are renounced as a result of wisdom, the very *Chitta* in man is destroyed. When this happens, the world no longer exists. The absolute cessation of the memory of the world is called *Moksha* (Liberation). In the state of Liberation, there is nothing to be liked or disliked.

Ignorance is the cause of egoism which is the nucleus sustaining the *Vasanas* of the mind. These *Vasanas* bring about the projection of the world-process in the placid expansion of Pure Consciousness.

When waking consciousness dawns in a person, he becomes detached from his dreams, even though his dreams may seem to continue. In the same way, when one attains intuitional enlightenment, he negates the reality of the world, even though his personality continues to exist in the world.

As long as ignorance is not removed, one does not wake up to the awareness of the Self. If one were to remove a *Pishacha* (evil spirit) that has been tormenting him in his dream, he will find another *Pishacha* arising in his dream world. The best thing to do, therefore, is to wake up from the dream and to realize that the events of dream are not real.

In the same way, a Yogi may withdraw his mind and senses in the state of *Samadhi*, and can enjoy a certain degree of freedom from mental distraction. But when he comes back from *Samadhi*, he finds himself caught in a world of distractions. On the other hand, when he has attained enlightenment, he sees the Self in all. Therefore, just as illusions of dream do not hurt a person who knows that he has been dreaming, so the illusions of the world do not affect a Sage who knows that he has been dreaming through his limited mind, and that the world is merely a projection which cannot affect his essential nature – the Self.

The scriptures hold that at the termination of a cosmic cycle, *Brahma* (the Creator) enters into *Brahman* (the Absolute), and the world-process enters into a nonmanifest state. With the commencement of the next cycle, another *Brahma* arises who takes up the work of creation. He does not have memories of the past creation, since he is a different creator. Therefore, his creation consists of the magic of His

mind — devoid of reality. Thus, on enquiry and reflection, it is proven that nothing has been born or created in this world. All this is nothing but the Pure Self that abides in Its own infinite glory.

Lila said: Oh Goddess, your words, like the rays of the morning sun, have revealed to me the glorious heights of wisdom. Please continue to instruct me until I am profoundly established in the Self through repeated affirmation of this divine wisdom.

Oh *Devi*, please lead me to the house of the *Brahmin* couple in the world of *Parvatgrama* where I and King *Padma* existed as *Arundhati* and *Vasistha*.

Goddess *Saraswati* said: Oh *Lila*, the erroneous vision that, "I am the body," is the obstacle that does not allow you to transcend this plane and enter into the world of *Vasistha* and *Arundhati*. Therefore, you must repeatedly affirm, "I am not this body."

The repeated affirmation that, "I am *Brahman*" removes the delusion of duality from one's intellect. As a result of this, one sees *Brahman* as the only Reality sustaining all that exists. Oh *Lila*, since you lack *Abhyasa* (repeated practice), you are unable to see *Parvatgrama*, though it exists here and now.

It is difficult to enter physically into the world of one's own thoughts. It is much more difficult to enter into the world of others' thoughts. Therefore, leave your body aside, and become identified with the ether of consciousness. By doing so, you will soon see the world of *Vasistha* and *Arundhati*.

Lila asked: Oh Goddess, I have left my body, and I am following you on the subtle path. But tell

me, how is it that I have to leave my body aside when you, Oh Goddess, are proceeding to the other world with the same body?

Goddess *Saraswati* explained: My body consists of *Sattwa* (the principle of purity). It does not obstruct my vision of Reality. Just as the breeze carries fragrance, so I will proceed to the world of *Parvatgrama* with this body.

In fact, your body is also subtle in nature, but due to the intensification of the illusion that, "I am this body," you have developed a deep-rooted notion about the physicality of your nature. Therefore, you cannot move to a subtler plane without leaving the body aside by the practice of meditation.

As a result of repeated *Samadhi*, when your *Vasanas* are gradually reduced, you will regain the subtlety of your being, even though you will continue to possess the apparant body. Then your body will not be a barrier obstructing your movement from one plane to another.

Oh *Lila*, physical objects are, in fact, projections of the mind. There is no physicality in this world. Even the astral plane that seems to appear as the physical world is not the Reality. Subtler than the subtle, there lies the plane of the Absolute Reality — the plane of *Brahman*.

Ignorance gives rise to subtle desires, and these subtle desires give rise to the projection of the world. But when you realize that ignorance itself does not exist, you discover the illusoriness of your desires. As a result of this, the whole world becomes illusory and nonexistent.

By preventing one from enquiring (*Avichara*), ignorance causes bondage. Therefore, enquiry (*Vichara*) is the most effective method for bringing about Liberation. With the light of enquiry and wisdom, you will find that there is neither ignorance nor absence of ignorance – neither bondage nor Liberation.

Wisdom removes *Dwaita Vasana* (the desires that sustain the perception of duality) and intensifies *Tattwa Vasana* (the mental impressions of the awareness that, “I am *Brahman*”). This leads to Liberation.

This world did not exist in the past, so how can there be memories of objects? Since there is no past sequence of happenings, how can there be *Vasanas* (subtle desires) in the mind? In the absence of *Vasanas*, how can there be the world of duality?

Therefore, Oh *Lila*, meditation on the Divine Self brings about the cessation of the illusory relationship between “seer” and “seen,” and roots out the world-process from your heart.

When *Samadhi* (which is characterized by the cessation of *Vasanas*) is perfected, you will discover yourself as the Self that sustains the illusions, desires and worlds of all individual souls. Also, you will become the very Goal wherein all sufferings end, and desires no longer exist.

Section 22 – *The Way to Destroy the Vasanas of the Mind*

Goddess *Saraswati* continued: Oh gentle *Lila*, the body that is experienced during dream continues

to be real for the dreamer, but on awakening, one discovers that it is illusory. In the same way, when the *Vasanas* are destroyed, one discovers that this physical body is also illusory and nonexistent.

With the rising of the knowledge that, "It is a dream," the dream world is negated. In the same way, with the attainment of the wisdom that, "I am *Brahman*," this world-process is negated.

When the dreamer realizes the illusoriness of his dream, he wakes up. Similarly, when a person realizes the illusoriness of the world-process, he wakes up to his essential nature — *Brahman*, the Absolute.

Vasanas (subtle desires in the mind) express themselves as dreams. When the *Vasanas* subside, the dreams dissolve, and one enters into profound sleep. In the same way, when the *Vasanas* that give rise to the waking state are dissolved, one enters into the profound peace of the Absolute.

The *Vasanas* that exist in a liberated Sage (*Jivanmukta*) are not backed up by desire, because he is established in the Self wherein this world-process is negated. His mentations are mere appearances, like the ashen forms of burnt up clothes. A Sage is endowed with pure *Vasanas* — mentations that do not obstruct the vision of the Self, because they are generated on the basis of intuitional vision.

When the *Vasanas* that cause a dream are destroyed, one enters into deep sleep. When the *Vasanas* that sustain waking state subside, one enters

into a state of intense inertia and dullness. However, when these *Vasanas* are dissolved on the basis of spiritual knowledge, one enters into the "sleepless sleep" of *Turiya* (the transcendental state beyond waking, dream and deep sleep).

A Sage who has brought about the cessation of *Vasanas* while yet alive is called a *Jivanmukta* — liberated in life. His life is beyond the comprehension of those who are not liberated.

Just as ice melts before the rays of the sun, so the ice of ignorance melts before the rays of wisdom. Consequently the *Vasanas* of the world are increasingly destroyed and thinned out. As a result of this, there arises the awareness, "I am not this body. I can move along with the mind unobstructedly."

When he has no sense of physicality, a Sage develops the ability to commune with the minds of Gods and other spirits that belong to different planes of existence. This is not possible for one whose mind has not regained its subtler nature by reducing its *Vasanas* (subtle desires).

When your ego is removed through repeated spiritual effort, you will discover your essential nature — the Self. Then this world-process will subside forever.

On this evolutionary path, you first discover the fact that you are not this body. You then become identified with the subtle body which is pervasive and unobstructed in its movements. Having gained this unique vision, you can behold the taintless worlds of Gods and perfected beings.

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On this evolutionary path, you first discover the fact that you are not this body. You then become identified with the subtle body which is pervasive and unobstructed in its movements. Having gained this unique vision, you can behold the taintless worlds of Gods and perfected beings.

Assert at all times, “I am not this body. This world is not real. Nothing exists. Nothing belongs to me. I am neither body nor mind. I am the Eternal Self.” This is called *Brahma Abhyasa* – repeated practice leading to the realization of *Brahman*.

By meditating upon the fact that this world is false, one attenuates *Raga* (attachment). Then the emergent devotion to Self leads one to Self-realization. If the attachment and hatred of the mind are only suppressed without having knowledge of the Self, then this suppression is called *Tapa* (austerity). But when the world is discovered as illusion, there is no need to suppress attachment and hatred; these are annihilated automatically.

Repeated affirmation that, “The world does not exist,” leads to Liberation. Just as the sun dissolves mist, so this wisdom dissolves ignorance. Just as the cooling waters of the Ganges reduce the tormenting heat of summer, so the stream of wisdom frees one from the fires of the world-process by nourishing his heart with the cooling nectar of immortality.

Section 23 to 26 – *Lila and Goddess Saraswati*
Travel with their Astral Bodies to the
World of Lila's Previous Existence

Sri Vasistha continued: Oh *Sri Rama*, at midnight, when all the attendants were asleep and the royal palace was redolent with the fragrance of flowers, *Lila* and Goddess *Saraswati*, after the preceding conversation, sat by the dead body of *Padma* which was covered with flowers.

Then both entered into profound *Samadhi* and became like painted pictures. They transcended body-consciousness and all perceptions of the external world. They discovered the fact that the world is illusory, and that it was never created.

With their minds freed from the evil spirit of the world-process, they took recourse to their divine astral bodies and began to soar in the ether of consciousness. Goddess *Saraswati* soared in the subtle sky with her normal body (since it was already spiritual), but *Lila* had to leave behind her physical body and flew with her astral body.

They did not really fly a great distance from the point of view of the physical world; their movement was confined to *Lila's* room. However, they penetrated the physical space, and entered into the space of the subtler plane wherein was situated the world of *Lila's* previous embodiment.

They felt as if they had flown through thousands of miles in space. They discovered that the vast sky was filled with numerous worlds. Every world was filled with numerous beings. In each world there were Gods roaming in their aerial cars, *Gandharvas* (celestial musicians) with their music and dance, Sages practising meditation, *Siddhas* (perfected spirits) roaming in the sky, and also *Rudra* (*Shiva*, the destroyer) and *Brahma* (the creator); and there were expansions of the sky free from all creations, like the purified hearts of the Sages.

Led by the will of Goddess *Saraswati*, *Lila* began to see the world of her previous existence – the place known as *Parvatgrama*. She saw great mountains and

valleys, and the towering sky filled with numerous beings. Thus, both pierced the mystic veil of *Lila's* own *Brahmanda* (universe), and entered into the *Brahmanda* of *Lila's* previous embodiment.

Soon *Lila* and *Saraswati* hastened to the house of *Vasistha* (the previous form of King *Padma*). Keeping themselves invisible to the people of that house, they began to observe various things. The house was an abode of grief. The inhabitants of the house were still grieving for the departed souls of *Vasistha* and *Arundhati*; the tears in their eyes had not yet dried, nor the sighs subsided.

Endowed with invincible will, they manifested themselves as twin Goddesses before the sight of the inhabitants of the house. *Jyeshthasharma* (the son of *Vasistha* and *Arundhati*) and the servants and maidservants of the house thought that these two were the Goddesses presiding over the forests (*Bana Devis*), and offered flowers to them with profound reverence.

Jyeshthasharma offered flowers to the Goddesses (not recognizing *Lila* as his late mother) and said: Oh Goddesses, please accept our adorations. Out of compassion, you have graced us with your presence to relieve us of our sorrows.

Lila and *Saraswati* asked: Please tell us about your grief. What has happened in this house? Why are all the people here sunk in grief?

Jyeshthasharma replied: Here in this house there lived a *Brahmin* couple. They loved each other intensely. They were my parents. They have now left

us; they have left all their dear relatives and friends as well as all their possessions. They passed on to the heavenly worlds. Without them, this world seems desolate for us.

Oh Goddesses, behold how even the birds have stopped singing as they brood over our grief. To our eyes the rivers flow with torrents of hot tears. The whole world seems to be grief-stricken. Please relieve us of our grief.

Sri Vasistha continued: When she heard the words of *Jyeshthasharma*, *Lila* placed her hand on his head. As a withering flower will bloom after a shower of rain, so the heart of *Jyeshthasharma* was delighted with the touch of *Lila's* hand.

Sri Rama asked: Oh Sage, why didn't *Lila* appear in the form of *Arundhati*, *Jyeshthasharma's* mother?

Sri Vasistha explained: Oh *Rama*, it was possible for *Lila* to appear in the form of *Jyeshthasharma's* mother, yet she did not do so, because she was no longer attached to the son of her previous embodiment. Her enlightened mind had revealed to her the illusoriness of human relationships. *Lila* did not place her hand on the head of *Jyeshthasharma* out of her previous attachment, but because of *Jyeshthasharma's* good Karma.

For one who has attained enlightenment, how can anyone be a relative or a friend? For a Sage, this world itself is nonexistent. *Brahman* is the only Reality. All these names and forms are nothing but the Unborn Absolute. One who knows *Brahman* is ever free from attachment and hatred.

Section 27 – *Lila's Past Lives*

Sri Vasistha continued: Oh *Rama*, *Lila* and *Saraswati* vanished from the sight of *Jyeshthasharma* and the servants. They all felt relieved of their sorrows as a result of the divine blessings they had received.

After they withdrew themselves from the sight of the people who dwelt in the house, *Lila* and *Saraswati* conversed with their astral bodies. All the while, they remained in the space of that room in *Parvatgrama*.

Goddess *Saraswati* asked: Oh gentle *Lila*, you have known whatever was to be known. You have seen that which was to be seen. You have gained an insight into the illusoriness of the world. Now what else would you like to know?

Lila said: Oh Goddess, when I was led by you to the present world of my husband where he is the ruler known as *Viduratha*, I was unable to appear before him. But in this world of my past embodiment, I have been able to appear before *Jyeshthasharma* and the others. Why is this so?

Goddess *Saraswati* explained: Oh Child, when you went to King *Viduratha's* world, you were still enveloped by the veil of illusion. You lacked the power of *Satsamkalpa* (true willing).

Because you lacked *Abhyasa* (repeated practice), you could not remove the deep-rooted impression of the illusory concept, "I am *Lila* having this particular body." But now you have developed that placid purity of mind which enables you to appear and disappear in any plane of existence by your mere will.

If you were to go to the present world of *Viduratha*, you would be able to appear before him in the form of *Lila*.

Lila said: Oh Goddess, it is indeed bewildering to the mind how in the ether of this room (in *Parvatgrama*), the souls of *Arundhati* and *Vasistha* experienced a world wherein they became *Lila* (myself) and *Padma* (my husband); and again, within the space of a room in *Padma's* palace, the spirit of *Padma* now experiences another world wherein he is a king known as *Viduratha*.

Now I am aware of the fact that *Brahman* (the Absolute) underlies the space in the room at *Parvatgrama*. Therefore, the numerous worlds that abide in *Brahman* can be said to abide in that space. Further, I understand that the world of *Viduratha* is not at a distance, but even here, penetrating this very space. Let us enter into that world as soon as possible.

Goddess *Saraswati* said: Oh *Lila*, you were *Arundhati* in this world. Do you remember only these three husbands — *Vasistha*, *Padma* and *Viduratha* — or are you able to remember your numerous past embodiments? To which plane do you want to go?

Oh Child, just as numerous dust particles scintillate in a single beam of light proceeding through a window into a dark room, so numerous worlds exist in a single ray of the Divine Glory of *Brahman*. All these worlds are projections of *Avidya* (ignorance). Just as one sees many strange formations in the vacant sky due to the various defects in the eyes, so one sees numerous worlds because of ignorance.

Just as countless ripples rise and fall in a lake, so numerous worlds arise and subside in the lake of *Brahman*.

Lila said: Oh Mother of the Universe, what you say is very true. Now I remember that this present embodiment has been *Rajasic* in nature (abounding with the principle of activity and desire). Therefore, I have experienced an abundance of sorrow and grief. I can remember 800 past embodiments since the projections of this creation. Every embodiment was like a reflection cast in the mirror of the pure mind.

Oh Goddess, in a different world-system, I was once a wife of *Vidyadhara* (a celestial being adept in music and dance). Tinged by evil desires, I was born as a woman in the world of human beings in yet another world-system; I became a black-complexioned *Bhillani* (a forest tribe).

Led by good gross *Vasanas* (subtle desires) in my mind, I became a vine in the *Ashram* of a Sage. There I was consumed by a forest fire and was reborn as the daughter of a great ascetic.

Led by good *Karmas*, I became a King in *Saurashtra*. Then, led by evil deeds, I became a mongoose, then a bird, then a black bee revelling in lotus blooms, then a deer. Thus, I continued to tumble from one embodiment to another.

I have ascended great heights and falled great depths. Like a bucket that goes up and down in a well again and again, so I have gone up and down in this mysterious well of the world-process.

Section 29 – *Lila Remembers More Details About her Previous Embodiment in the form of Arundhati*

Sage *Vasistha* continued: Oh *Rama*, Goddess *Saraswati* and *Lila* both flew out of the house in *Parvatagrama* and began to see that mountainous valley without being seen by the villagers dwelling there. As a result of increasing mental purity, *Lila* began to remember the details of her past embodiment in the form of *Arundhati*.

Lila said: Oh Goddess, by Your Grace, I remember the details of my past life. In this very place, I became an old lady; my body grew thin and covered with veins showing through my withering skin. My hands were scratched by the *Kusha* grass which I had to work with. My hair had turned grey although my body was still fair in complexion.

I was the devoted wife of my husband, and a mother of many children. I served Saints and Sages with devotion, and was ever diligent in performing my devout services to the Gods.

Daily I washed the dishes, prepared the sacrificial altar, cleaned the various vessels used for sacrificial performances, and kept the house well adorned.

I had a glass bangle on my wrist which used to be covered with dough, as I was ever engaged in cooking. I was also involved in serving my father, mother, husband and children in various other ways.

I was constantly goading my sons, daughters-in-law, and servants to perform their duties

quickly. I would say to them, "Hasten, be quick! Why are you delaying in this work?" And I kept myself busy to set a good example for them.

I never found time to think, "Who am I? What is the nature of this world? Is this world real or illusory?" My husband was also deeply involved in his household duties. He recited the *Vedic* verses, but his intellect was not purified.

Sometimes, covered with a tattered blanket, I used to remove ticks from the ears of a little calf. At other times I would shout at my servants to irrigate the farmlands. On yet other occasions, I used to bring green fodder for the little calves.

I would give instructions to my servants as to how they must conduct themselves. At times I scolded them for their bad manners, eager as I was to perfect my household.

Oh Goddess, behold! This is my garden abounding with *Patala* trees. Here is the lake by the banks of which my calves are still tied. This is my darling calf known as *Karnika*; she has given up eating and drinking because of separation from me. Here is the poor woman who brings water to my house. She also has become weak because of her grief. Eight days have passed, and yet the tears are still present in her eyes.

Here is the place where I used to take food. Here I used to sleep, and here I used to gather fruits and flowers. Here is the house where my eldest son, *Jyeshthasharma*, lives in grief. Here is my cow grazing on the grass in the forest.

This is my kitchen. See how my dear relatives have bloodshot eyes because of constant weeping. They are carrying fuel for the fire. Their bodies are adorned with *Rudraksha* beads.

I see the banks of the lake buffeted by waves, and the verdant meadows covered with leafy plants that glisten with dewdrops. Middays used to be mantled by sunbeams, and the gardens used to resounded with the humming bees that fluttered around the fragrant flowers.

There I see the altar of my house, decorated with flowering creepers and adorned with clusters of fruits and flowers.

I remember how my husband cherished the fond wish of becoming a king and how, even in the space of that very room, he entered into a different world-system wherein he lived for a long time as a king, and I as his queen. And all of this has happened in only eight days from the point of view of *Parvatgrama*.

How bewildering it is to discover that within a small space about the size of a thumb, my husband, overcome by ignorance, felt as if he were a ruler of a vast dominion. Indeed, the divine *Maya* is miraculous!

Oh Goddess, I wish now to enter into the city where my husband (as *Viduratha*) presently reigns. For us, nothing is inaccessible now.

Sri Vasistha continued: Then, led by Goddess *Saraswati*, *Lila* entered into the room in the house.

They penetrated the space and flew like birds into the sky. They went beyond the sun and moon, transcended even the pole star, and after passing through various planes, found themselves swimming through the ocean of darkness. Finally they entered into the world of *Viduratha*.

Oh *Rama*, the extension of subtle space cannot be conceived by the mind. It contains numerous worlds. If a mighty rock were to fall from one point in that space with increasing momentum, and if the *Garuda* bird were to fly upward (on a collision course) with his immense speed from another point in that space, the two would never meet. Such is the immense vastness of *Chidakasha* (the ether of consciousness).

Brief of Section 30 to 39 – *Lila Enters into the World of Viduratha and Witnesses a Terrible Battle*

Sri Vasistha continued: Oh *Rama*, *Lila* saw numerous worlds appear like bubbles in the vastness of consciousness. Some worlds abound with trees and anthills. Some worlds are inhabited by gods, demons and other celestial spirits. Some worlds are ruled by *Brahma*. Some are created and sustained by Lord *Vishnu*. And some are created by *Rudra*, *Durga* and other Deities. These different worlds are full of wonders. It is impossible to describe the worlds that shine like scintillating dust particles illumined by the Effulgent Self.

In fact, those whose vision is tinged by ignorance perceive numerous worlds in the placid sky of Pure Consciousness. These worlds arise out of illusion and are constantly rushing to different

destinations. In this boundless space of consciousness, there is neither above nor below. Human beings abide in the world like ants clinging to a round fruit.

After observing the wonders of these numerous worlds, *Lila* and Goddess *Saraswati* both entered into the world of *Padma*. They beheld the dead body of *Padma* still covered with flowers, and *Lila* saw her own physical body seated like a painted picture, absorbed in *Samadhi*. The people of the royal palace were still in deep sleep, and the atmosphere was filled with fragrance emanating from sandalwood, camphor, and other fragrant materials.

Then *Lila* desired to see her husband (as King *Viduratha*) who existed in a different world-system that was confined to the space in her room in the royal palace.

Lila and Goddess *Saraswati* again penetrated the subtle space, flew through vast space, and alighted in the world of *Viduratha*. By this time many years had passed in the world of *Viduratha*. By this time King *Viduratha* was engaged in a terrible battle. *Lila* and Goddess *Saraswati*, seated in aerial cars, observed the events of the battle.

King *Sindhu* had challenged King *Viduratha* with a vast army. Both armies fought a terrible battle. Rivers of blood began to flow, and the battlefield was strewn with dead bodies of human beings, camels, horses, and elephants, as well as with broken weapons, chariots, and numerous other objects.



Goddess Saraswati enter the Palace of King Viduratha

At the decline of the day, when darkness began to spread over the earth, the battle was postponed until the next day, and the armies retired to rest in their camps. King *Viduratha* retired to his palace, and being fatigued and wounded, entered into deep sleep.

Then *Lila* and Goddess *Saraswati* both flew into the palace through the narrow space of a window. They entered into the palace much like twin currents of a breeze.

Section 40 – *The Nature of the Subtle Body*

Sri Rama asked: Oh Sage, how was it possible for *Lila* and *Saraswati* to enter through the narrow space of the window into the royal palace? How can this body which is gross, enter through a small hole the size of the stem of a lotus?

Sri Vasistha explained: Oh Sinless *Rama*, for one who is established in the conviction, "I am not this gross body; I am the subtle, all-pervading Self," it is easy to enter wherever he may like. But for one who is deluded by the notion that he is nothing but the physical body, it is impossible to pass through such narrow holes.

Yogis who possess psychic powers can reduce their bodies to any size because they are not identified with them. They have gained an insight into the fact that the physical body is the materialization of the astral body.

Even some lower spirits have the power of unobstructed movement. They can pass through small

holes. When a Sage becomes identified with the Supreme Self, his powers become endless.

Every human being is mental in nature. His physical body is an appearance sustained by an abstract mental substance. Even this mental body is nothing but the Self. For one who is established in this wisdom, nothing upon this earth is inaccessible.

The experience of death arises as an act of the mind. Wherever a person dies, there he experiences his journey into astral worlds as well as his new embodiment. In fact, he does not go anywhere. For example, to experience dream conditions, one need not go anywhere. In the same way, from the point of view of the Absolute Reality, there is nowhere to go. One is always the Self that transcends time and space.

Oh *Rama*, the ether of the physical world (*Bhutakasha*) is an appearance sustained by the ether of the mind (*Chittakasha*). Further, the ether of the mind is also an appearance sustained by the ether of the Self (*Chidakasha*), which is the ultimate and only Reality.

Though both the physical body and the astral body (consisting of mind) are illusions sustained by the Self, yet from a relative point of view, the mind has a greater power of pervasion than the physical body. The mind can enter even into an atom. It can abide in the middle of the sky. It can become sap in a leaf.

This mind can sport on ocean waves. It can even dance inside stones. It can rise to the clouds, and shower in the rain. It can become minute, or it can

become so vast that even the forests would appear like thin hairs on its body, and the mighty mountains would become but a fragment of its limbs.

Oh *Rama*, this entire world is an apparent refraction of the Mind (Cosmic Mind). The individual mind, when freed from the pressure of egoistic vision, becomes aware of the fact that it is nothing but the Cosmic Mind. Thus, it becomes aware of its unimaginable cosmic powers.

Oh *Rama*, every individual possesses the potentiality of the Cosmic Mind. *Brahma*, who is the Spirit presiding over the Cosmic Mind, creates this universe in the beginning of every cycle of creation by projecting His Mind. This creation is not based upon any memories of the past creation, because at the termination of a creation, *Brahma* is said to attain Liberation from the world-process. But every new *Brahma* projects the world on the basis of the same Cosmic Mind.

In brief, this creation is mental in nature. It is always subtle, but due to the limitations of the mind, it appears gross and physical.

Deluded by ignorance, the individual soul, which is essentially the Self, begins to experience a world even in the placid ether of consciousness. It sees the realms of the Gods, the mountains, rivers, oceans, and planetary systems.

Like a bird enclosed in the hollow of a tree, the individual soul experiences birth, death, and numerous diseases of the body and mind. It is ever engaged in securing what is pleasant and removing what is painful.

This solid world is, in fact, sustained by the *Samkalpas* (mentations) of the mind. If one reflects deeply, one finds that this world is a vaporous substance and not a solid reality.

Oh *Rama*, meditate upon this fact that the world is nothing but the mind, and the mind is nothing but the Self. This Self is the only reality behind all names and forms and is the ultimate goal to be realized by every soul.

Lila and Goddess *Saraswati* had both realized their spiritual bodies. Therefore, they passed through the narrow holes of the window, and thus entered the royal palace of King *Viduratha*.



Section 41 – *King Viduratha Wakes Up to Find Two Goddesses Before Him*

Sri Vasistha continued: Oh *Rama*, prompted by Goddess *Saraswati*, the King woke up. To his amazement, he saw his room lit up by the effulgence of two Goddesses. He got up from his bed in haste, seated himself in lotus pose, and uttering words of praise, offered a handful of flowers to the two celestial beings.

King *Viduratha* said: Oh Goddesses, adorations to you both! You shine like two moons and allay the sufferings of my heart.

In the meantime, Goddess *Saraswati* prompted the King's minister to wake up so that he could speak for the King. The royal minister woke up accordingly, and expressed his delight and amazement at the sight of the Goddesses.

Goddess *Saraswati* asked the King: Oh King, who are you? Where were you born? Whose son are you? Please relate your story to me.

The Minister replied on behalf of the King: (as was the custom in ancient times) Oh Goddess, in the glorious line of *Ikshwaku*, there was once a King known as *Kundaratha*, who was well known for his valor. His son, *Bhadraratha*, was both handsome and valiant. *Bhadraratha*, in turn, had a son, *Vishwaratha*, who ruled after his father. *Vishwaratha* was succeeded by his son, *Shailratha*. Thus, in this succession, *Shailaratha* was succeeded by his son *Kamaratha* and he by *Maharatha*, and he by *Vishnuratha*, and he by *Nabhoratha*.

King *Nabhoratha* was a delight to his subjects. He was endowed with all the excellent qualities that befit a monarch. Our King *Viduratha* was born as his son through Queen *Sumitra*. When Prince *Viduratha* was only ten years old his father, King *Nabhoratha*, wanted to attain enlightenment and went to live in the forest. He renounced his kingdom, and installed *Viduratha* as the King.

Since then, Oh Goddesses, King *Viduratha* has been ruling his subjects righteously. It is through his righteousness that today, we are blessed with the presence of you both.

Then Goddess *Saraswati* touched the King's head with her hand saying, "Oh King, now remember your last embodiment."

At this, the delusion dispersed from the heart of the King. He remembered himself as a reincarnation of King *Padma* and became aware of the events of the past. Like one who has emerged from the deep waters of the ocean, the King expressed profound amazement.

King *Viduratha* said: Oh Goddesses, what a wonder it is! In the world of my previous embodiment, only a day has passed, while here I have lived for seventy years. I remember the events of that life; even the memories of my grandfather are still fresh before my mind. I remember my childhood, my youth, my friends and relatives. How could all this be possible?

Goddess *Saraswati* explained: When you died as *Padma*, you experienced a kind of swoon. And even within the space of a room in *Padma's* palace, you experienced yourself as *Viduratha*.

Further, King *Padma's* world is confined to the space in a room in *Parvatgrama*. Oh King, such is the power of *Maya*! A vast world can be confined to a little space, and there are worlds within worlds. Every portion of the world is capable of sustaining numerous worlds. This is because the Self, Pure Consciousness, is the Reality behind every worldly phenomenon.

Just as a current in a river flows on leaving one whirlpool and entering into another, so the current of mind continues to flow on from one creation to another. Sometimes creations of many souls seem to blend; sometimes they stay separated from each other, even like the dreams arising in every human being.

In fact, O King, you are essentially the Divine Self. There is no birth or death for you. Nothing is real. This earth does not exist. These mountains, villages and cities are projections of illusion. Enemies and friends are mere appearances.

For those who have attained intuitional vision, the Self alone exists. When the rope is recognized, the fallacy of the snake disappears. In the same way, when the Self is realized, the illusion of the world-process vanishes. Or when a person recognizes the sands as the basis of a mirage, the latter becomes ineffective. In the same way, when the world is realized as *Brahman*, it can no longer delude the mind of the wise.

**Section 42, 43, 44 – Ignorance Lends Reality
to Waking and Dream States**

Sage *Vasistha* continued: For those who do not have a pure intellect illumined by the sun of wisdom, this world is the only reality. It is the deluded intellect that lends reality to this world even though it is, in fact, nonexistent and unreal.

Oh *Rama*, consider this world as a long dream. See how a dream world is experienced in the minute passages of the *Sushumna Nadi* (the mystic channel in the spine). See how pure consciousness is refracted into a system of time, space and causation due to the subtle desires of the subconscious.

When you wake up, you discover the illusoriness of your dreams. Compared to dream, the waking state is considered real. But with deep insight, you can see how the waking state is just as unreal as a dream. While dream is contradicted by waking, the waking state is contradicted by dream. Both are refractions of consciousness brought about by illusion; and both are superimposed upon the Self.

Now listen to the story of *Lila*. Goddess *Saraswati* told King *Viduratha* how she had guided *Lila* to different worlds in order to impart spiritual wisdom to her.

King *Viduratha* said to Goddess *Saraswati*: Oh Goddess, I am an ordinary mortal, yet I fulfill the needs of those who seek my help. You are the giver of infinite gifts. I have taken refuge in You. Soon, setting aside this physical body, I will pass on to the world of *Padma*. May this minister as well as this unmarried daughter of mine follow me into that world.

Goddess *Saraswati* said: May it be so. Your wishes will be granted. Oh King, in this battle, you are going to die. The Princess and your minister will leave their physical bodies and will follow your spirit's astral path.

While this conversation was in progress, a servant entered the room in a state of fright and reported to the King that the enemies had devastated the capital and had entered the palace gates. Soon the clamor of battle filled the atmosphere. The King prepared himself for confronting his enemies.

At that moment, *Viduratha's* beloved queen entered the room. She was an exact replica of *Lila*. Beautifully attired, endowed with the charm of youth, this *Lila* had come to seek refuge with the King. Seeing this, the King said to the two (Goddess *Saraswati* and *Lila*): Oh Goddesses, a mountain of misery has fallen upon me. Please excuse me – I must go to fight my enemies. Meanwhile, my queen, *Lila* will serve your lotus feet. Please protect her.

(For the sake of convenience we will use "*Lila*" for the enlightened *Lila*, and "*Lila-2*" for *Lila Viduratha's* queen.)

Lila asked: Oh Goddess, how is it that this queen appears exactly as I used to appear in my youth? How can I be existing in the form of this queen? What is the mystery behind it? Also, these ministers and attendants of the King look exactly like those in the world of *Padma*. How is it possible for them to exist both here as well as there?

Goddess *Saraswati* explained: Oh *Lila*, the power of consciousness is endless. Similar Karmas give rise to both similar and dissimilar conditions. During dream, a person encounters friends and similar relatives to those in the waking state. He also encounters dissimilar personalities. In the same way, King *Viduratha* has attracted to himself a world-process wherein he is attended by similar ministers, and is wedded to a similar queen.

This world exists like a reflection in the mirror of the *Chitta* (mind), but due to intensification of illusion, it becomes real for the soul. Though the world of King *Viduratha* is made of the substance of dream arising from the mind of King *Padma*, yet it has become real for him, because his essential Spirit, the Self, has rendered all this real.

With deep insight you can understand the illusoriness of this world. At the time of birth, death becomes illusory. During dream, the waking world does not exist. Upon waking up, the dream becomes nonexistent. In fact, this illusory world is sustained by the Reality of the Self. When the illusion is negated, all this is realized as *Brahman*.

Lila-2 exists as an image of your own self. But she has been rendered real by the force of consciousness that underlies the subtle desires of *Viduratha*. You, I, and the King are confined to this world. This world is confined to a universe. This universe drifts like a dust particle in the vastness of mystic space. That mystic space is nothing but Pure Consciousness (*Brahman*).

Section 45 – Goddess Saraswati Grants a Boon
to Lila (Viduratha's Queen)

Sri Saraswati said: Oh *Lila*, King *Viduratha* is going to be killed in this battle. After death, he will enter again into the body of *Padma* which lies covered with flowers in your palace.

After hearing this, *Lila-2* said: Oh Goddess, I have always been a devotee of Goddess *Saraswati*. Many times during my dreams I have been blessed with the vision of Goddess *Saraswati*. You look exactly like the divine vision of my dreams. Surely, you are the Goddess whom I have worshipped day and night. Please confer on me this boon. When my husband dies, may I follow him to his next embodiment as King *Padma* and be his queen. May I enter into *Padma's* world with my physical body.

Goddess *Saraswati* replied: Oh *Lila-2*, I am immensely pleased with your devotion. Therefore, your boon is granted. You will enter your husband's next world even with your physical body.

On hearing this, *Lila* (the first) was confounded. Wishing to be enlightened on this matter, she asked: Oh Goddess, you are endowed with the power of *Satya Kama* (the ability to convert every desire or thought into a reality). You have the power to bring me into the world of King *Viduratha* even in my physical form. So why did you teach me the art of leaving the physical body and traveling through the subtle worlds with the subtle body, while this *Lila-2* has been granted the boon of going to the world of *Padma* in her own physical body? I do not understand this apparent partiality.

Goddess *Saraswati* replied: I am the Deity presiding over Consciousness in every being. I grant whatever the individual soul wishes on the basis of its devotion to Me. I do not impose anything upon anyone on the basis of My own wishes (because I have none).

In fact, I do nothing to anyone. Every soul receives from Me whatever he desires. Since I am the Deity of his Consciousness, I allow his sincerest desires to be fulfilled.

You have adored Me for attaining wisdom and Liberation. Therefore, you have been led to journey through the subtle worlds with your subtle body. You have been given the experiences which are necessary for your enlightenment.

Whatever boon a person receives from a Deity is due to his own self-effort. Your own self-effort assumes the form of a God or a Goddess and grants a boon that is the fruit of your sustained movement.

An individual determines what is good for himself. Then he directs his effort towards the attainment of what is good. As a result of his sustained effort, I, the Deity of his Consciousness, grant him success. Knowing this, Oh *Lila*, direct your attention to Liberation, the highest attainment, and be free.

Section 46 to 51 – *King Viduratha*
Fights with King Sindhu

Sri Rama asked: O Sage, when the two *Lilas* and the Goddess were conversing among themselves in the

royal palace, King *Viduratha* went out of the palace to fight with his enemies. What happened to him?

Sri Vasistha replied: Oh *Rama*, King *Viduratha* organized his entire army, and like the moon surrounded by stars, he proceeded to meet his enemies in the battlefield. King *Viduratha* was riding in a chariot that was yoked to eight powerful horses. Soon the battlefield resounded with the neighing of the horses, the clatter of weapons, the hissing of arrows, the cries of the injured, the shouts of the warriors, and the tumultuous sound of drums and conches.

While the two armies were fighting this terrible battle, the two *Lilas* asked the Goddess: Oh Goddess, King *Viduratha* is your devotee. He has received your grace. So why isn't he winning this battle?

Goddess *Saraswati* replied: Oh Daughters, King *Sindhu* is also my devotee. He has worshipped me for the sake of attaining victory over his enemies. Therefore, he is going to be victorious.

King *Viduratha* did not worship me for the attainment of victory. He has sought My Grace to re-enter the body of King *Padma*, and then to attain Liberation. Therefore, he is going to be defeated and killed.

I am the Deity of Consciousness seated in the heart of all living beings. Whoever worships Me, receives My Grace according to his desires. One who worships Me for victory and success in this world,

attains them. But one who worships Me for Liberation is led through the experiences of life that are conducive to spiritual enlightenment.

Oh Children, King *Viduratha* will go back to the body of King *Padma* and will abide with both of you as an enlightened personality. In due course of time, all three of you will enter into the state of disembodied Liberation.

Sri Vasistha continued: While Goddess *Saraswati* was talking to the two *Lilas* the sun began to set in the western horizon. The fight between the two armies was terrible. It was as if two oceans had come to fuse with each other during the time of universal dissolution.

Soon the two Kings came face to face in the process of fighting. King *Viduratha* exhibited his extraordinary skill in shooting arrows. Arrows streamed from his bow like cascading waters. But King *Sindhu* was equally valiant in counteracting the arrows of immense power. Both the Kings used celestial weapons governed by the powers of various Gods.

King *Sindhu* discharged an arrow governed by serpents. The sky became filled with hissing snakes. But King *Viduratha* counteracted that weapon by discharging an arrow governed by *Garuda* (a bird that feeds on snakes). The snakes soon disappeared.

Similarly, King *Sindhu* discharged the fire weapon which was counteracted by the water weapon discharged by King *Viduratha*. The weapon governed by wind was counteracted by the weapon governed

by mountains. The weapon governed by thunderbolts was counteracted by the weapon governed by *Brahma*.

During this terrible battle, King *Sindhu* lost his chariot. He continued fighting on foot, and with the dexterity of his hands, he destroyed *Viduratha's* chariot. Consequently, both the Kings began to fight on foot. In the course of the fight, King *Sindhu* threw a spear which pierced the heart of King *Viduratha*. However, he did not die immediately.

At this stage of the battle, *Lila-2* asked *Lila*: Oh Goddess, how terrible! King *Sindhu* is looking for a powerful weapon to destroy my husband. But behold! Our King, even though injured, has skillfully entered into his own chariot. But, alas, even that chariot has been destroyed by King *Sindhu*. Now the enemy King has pierced the shoulders of my husband. *Lila-2* fell down in a swoon and departed.

In the meantime, the King's charioteer lifted the wounded body of the King into another chariot and drove back to the palace. The enemies chased the Chariot up to the palace gates. The wounded King was brought into the presence of Goddess *Saraswati*. Because of Her divine presence, his enemies were not able to pursue him into his palace. And then, in the presence of the Goddess, the King passed away.

Sri Vasistha continued: Oh *Rama*, King *Sindhu* and his army began to shout with joy. They declared their victory and rejoiced at the death of their enemy. While great rejoicing took place among the army of King *Sindhu*, a mantle of dark pathos fell upon the relatives, friends and soldiers of King *Viduratha*.

Sections 52 and 53— *King Viduratha Dies
and Lila-2 Reaches the World of Padma:
More Illusions of the World-process*

King *Viduratha* was about to depart from his body. Seeing this, *Lila* asked Goddess *Saraswati*:

Oh Goddess, my husband is ready to leave the body of *Viduratha*. Behold how he struggles to free himself from this physical body!

Goddess *Saraswati* said: Oh gentle *Lila*, you have seen this great battle and have witnessed the terrible events, and yet, all this exists like a dream. Nothing has been created, and nothing has been destroyed.

Recall, Oh *Lila*, the small space in the house of *Brahmin Vasistha* in the world system where there is a village known as *Parvatgrama*. Recall, Oh *Lila*, that different world system containing *Parvatgrama*. In that village, there lived a *Brahmin* known as *Vasistha*. In the space of *Vasistha*'s room, there exists another world system. It is in that world that the spirits of *Vasistha* and his wife *Arundhati* became King *Padma* and his beloved Queen *Lila*.

Is it not a wonder how the vast world of *Padma* is confined to a little space in the room of *Brahmin Vasistha*! And this creation is still more wonderous. In a room in King *Padma*'s palace, in a small space, the spirit of King *Padma* has experienced a world system wherein he became a King known as *Viduratha*. All that you have witnessed is confined to a little space in King *Padma*'s room.

Understand the illusoriness of this world, Oh *Lila*, and direct your mind to the Eternal Self wherein

the worlds cease to exist. That Self is non-dual, unborn, immortal, and the supreme abode of all souls. All this is indeed that Supreme Self.

Oh *Lila*, the moment *Lila-2* fell into a swoon, her spirit departed, and she has now reached the world of King *Padma*. She is seated by the dead body of the King, which is still covered with flowers.

Lila asked: Oh Goddess, why has *Lila-2* already reached King *Padma*'s body? What has led her to become a co-wife in my palace? How will all this be understood by my attendants in the world of King *Padma*?

Goddess *Saraswati* explained: Oh *Lila*, this terrible war that you have seen is illusory. Similarly, even the form of *Lila-2* is illusory. The death of King *Viduratha* is also an illusory development.

In fact, both you and *Lila-2* are illusions sustained by the Eternal Self. King *Padma* exists only like an apparent reality — like a mirage or the passing contents of a dream.

This *Lila-2*, yourself, Myself, King *Padma*, and this world — all these are appearances sustained by the Reality of the Non-dual Self.

In this apparent world we exist in each other's minds and are sustained by the thoughts and desires arising from our minds. When your husband, King *Padma*, died, his desire to be in your company gave rise to a projected *Lila*, *Lila-2*, in the world of King *Viduratha*.

All experiences in life are projections on the screen of Pure Consciousness caused by the operations of *Vasanas* (subtle desires of the mind). It is the miracle of *Vasana* that makes an object seem real in this world of illusion.

When the soul of *Lila-2* willed to depart from her body, it became identified with her astral body, passed out of her mouth, and departed from this world.

She experienced death much like a swoon, and now sees herself as a physical personality (due to the power of her mentation).

Sri Vasistha continued: Oh *Rama*, when *Lila-2* died in the world of King *Viduratha*, her spirit identified itself with her mental body and flew into the sky with the intention of going to the world of King *Padma* to meet her husband. On the way, she was welcomed and guided by the spirit of her young daughter by King *Viduratha*.

Apparently, the young daughter of *Lila-2* had also departed from her physical body; but her spirit, pursuing the course of its Karma, did not materialize in the world of King *Padma*. After guiding *Lila-2* through the astral planes, the daughter's spirit vanished.

After *Lila-2* entered into the world of King *Padma*, she found herself seated by the dead body of the King. She felt that she had journeyed through the

astral worlds in her own physical body from the world of King *Viduratha*, and this was possible through the Grace of Goddess *Saraswati*.

Thinking within herself, "How fortunate I am to have joined my husband who lies here wounded, and who will come back to life by the blessings of Goddess *Saraswati*," *Lila-2* began to fan the face of the King.

Goddess *Saraswati* said to *Lila* (the first): Oh *Lila*, you yourself have appeared in the form of *Lila-2* because of your intense desire to be with your husband. *Lila-2* is nothing but a shadow proceeding from your personality.

Lila asked: Oh Goddess, why is the second *Lila* welcomed by the servants and attendants of the King? Are they not surprised to see a strange personality?

Goddess *Saraswati* replied: Oh *Lila*, behold the miracle of *Maya* (cosmic illusion)! *Lila-2* is not viewed as a stranger. Rather, they accept her as their Queen. All relationships are sustained by the vibrations of the mind. Led by Divine Will and sustained by the Reality of the Self, human beings find themselves involved in different patterns of relationships, and they resign to the apparent realities of existence.

But both you and *Lila-2* are aware of the subtler mysteries behind the apparent realities of the world.

Lila asked: Oh Goddess, **Lila-2** had received the boon that she would go to the world of **Padma** with her own body. Why is it that even though she was granted the boon, yet she had to leave her physical body behind?

Goddess **Saraswati** explained: It is impossible for the body of dream to enter into the body of waking state.

But those who are ignorant about the nature of the Self are identified with their physical bodies. They cannot physically move from one plane to another.

The awareness of the body is sustained by mental impressions. This is why **Lila-2** did not feel that her body was left behind. Her experience was that she was guided to the world of **Padma** with her own physical body.

Those who meditate upon the reality, "I am not this body," rise beyond the physical body. They gain the power of **Samkalpa** (true willing). Thereby, they can move to any plane of existence without a change of bodies (since they possess none).

Section 54 – The Process of Death, and the Karmas that Determine the Life Span of an Individual

Lila said: Oh Goddess, King **Viduratha** is about to die. What leads to one's death? What determines the life span of an individual? Please enlighten me on these points.

Goddess *Saraswati* said: The Karmas of a person determine his life span. Some Karmas bring about death in childhood, some cause death in youth, some allow a person to die in old age. Those who have lived a righteous life and are sustained by righteous Karmas live a life as long as the ideal life described in the scriptures.

The Karmas of an individual are related to time, space, activity and material resources. They are either good or evil. They determine one's experiences after death, the nature of the next embodiment, one's life span, and all experiences of pleasure and pain.

Lila asked: Oh Goddess, is death painful or pleasant? What happens after death? Must all people have similar experiences after death or do different people have different experiences?

Goddess *Saraswati* explained: There are three types of dying persons: 1) the dull-witted, 2) the Yogi who is striving to practise concentration and meditation, and 3) the established Yogi.

One who has not purified his intellect by good association and has remained sunk in the muddy waters of ignorance experiences intense pain during death. He feels as if he has been thrown into a blazing furnace. His throat begins to choke, strange noises proceed from his throat, his eyeballs turn upwards, and the very complexion of his face changes. He sees nothing but darkness before his eyes. He is unable to express himself. His senses become dull, and his mind is overpowered by delusion. He enters into a state which is inert like a stone.

At the moment of death, he feels as if he is drowning in the ocean, as if he is borne on through the sky, as if thrown into a dark well, as if driven through a dense stone, as if the very world had been turned topsy turvy. Experiencing numerous afflictions, he passes on into the deep swoon of death.

Goddess *Saraswati* continued: Oh *Lila*, such is the Divine Will which causes the soul to experience pleasure and pain according to its Karmas.

At the time of death, guided by the Divine Will, the *Samana Prana* (the vital force which performs the function of digestion and assimilation) stops performing its functions. The astral channels (*Nadis*) become blocked; they do not allow the Pranas to flow on in a healthy manner. When the Pranas cease functioning, one is said to be dead.

Death is caused by the *Samkalpa* (will) of the soul. Since the soul is essentially the Divine Self, it is the Divine Will that sanctions the individual will's decision to bring about the death of the body.

Led by the illusion of the world-process, the individual soul rises to higher levels or descends to lower levels of consciousness. Like a river that flows sometimes with clear water and sometimes with muddy water, so the stream of individual existence is at times brightened by good Karmas and at other times tainted by evil Karmas.

The essence of the soul is Pure Consciousness. This Consciousness cannot die. The true identity of a

person is not his body, nor his vital forces, nor his senses, nor his mind or intellect. Therefore how can this Consciousness be said to die?

How can a person witness his own death? Who has ever witnessed the death of Consciousness? It is Pure Consciousness that assumes the form of numerous souls abiding in numerous bodies. In spite of the illusory drama of birth and death, the Self in every being is immortal, deathless and free.

In fact, the experiences of birth and death are projections of the mind caused by one's *Vasanas* (subtle desires). There is neither death nor birth for you. You are that immortal Self.

When an aspirant studies the scriptures under the guidance of a Guru, and when he practises listening, reflection and meditation, his desires based upon the illusions of the multiplicity of the world are replaced by the vision of non-duality. Then he becomes an established Yogi. He is ever free from birth and death.



Section 55 – *Experiences After Death*

Lila asked: Oh Goddess, please enlighten me more on the subject of death, and on what happens to different souls after death. This will intensify my dispassion towards the world-process.

Goddess *Saraswati* replied: When the *Pranas* cannot flow through the *Nadis* (astral channels), they begin to depart from the body. Then the mind moves into the heart, and consciousness becomes, as it were, without any vibration. This is called death. When the body, which is already inert, is deprived of *Pranas*, it is called dead.

People in this world call the departed spirit *Preta*. After death, the spirit is mingled with its subtle desires, much like wind that carries fragrance. After it discards this body, the soul is compelled by its subtle desires, and it becomes eager to behold new forms of the world-process. Having passed through the swoon-like state of death, the spirit wakes up to find itself in another body.

Oh *Lila*, there are six types of departed souls (*Pretas*): 1) sinful, 2) moderately sinful, 3) intensely sinful, 4) virtuous, 5) moderately virtuous, and 6) intensely virtuous.

An ordinary sinner is led to human embodiment in a short time. He is guided by his *Vasanas* (subtle desires) to experience a human birth even as a person is led to experience the world of dreams.

One who is moderately sinful is a greater sinner than the previous kind. He experiences a stone-like state of swoon for a long time. Then he is born as various animals and birds. Having passed through many such embodiments, he finally becomes a human being again.

One who is intensely sinful continues to suffer hellish miseries after death. He drifts from one pain to another. After passing through numerous embodiments as insects, birds and animals, he attains human embodiment.

After one who is moderately virtuous dies, he sees himself being guided by divine beings through heavenly gardens that abound with beautiful trees, creepers, and flowers. He enjoys celestial pleasures on the basis of his good Karmas. When he exhausts the Karmas that bear fruit in the heavenly worlds, he falls from the heavens, and having passed through wind, rain and food, he enters into a male body, and then passes on to a female body. Thus, he reincarnates as a human being.

One who is intensely virtuous experiences more intensive joys of the heavenly world until, following a similar process, he is finally led to be born in a righteous family.

All experiences of heaven and hell take place in the "heart" of a person. He does not really go anywhere. He is ever the Self that transcends time and space. However, such is the miracle of *Vasanas*, that one feels that he has been led to different planes, that he has experienced different conditions of pleasure and pain, and that he must continue to wander in the world-process driven by his Karmas.

While the virtuous, after their death, feel that they are being welcomed by the heavenly Gods, the sinners feel that they have been led to the God of Death (*Yama*), and that *Yama* has passed judgement on them.

After experiencing the swoon of death, a departed soul becomes associated with a process of illusory recollections, and feels, "I am dead. My relatives have performed rituals to help me. My friends have offered prayers for me."

A sinful soul feels, "No one has offered prayers for me. I am being driven by the messengers of death to experience the fruits of my sinful Karmas. I am being led through thorny forests; I am being driven through icy rocks."

A moderately virtuous soul feels that he is being led through green pastures, cool shadowy trees, and beautiful sights of nature.

Oh *Lila*, the soul follows the illusory path projected by the *Vasanas*. Now behold how the soul of *Viduratha* is intent upon entering the body of *Padma*! It feels that it has to travel a long way in order to reach *Padma*'s body.

Section 56 to 58 – *The Departure of Viduratha*

Sri Vasistha continued: Meanwhile, *Viduratha*'s eyes became still, his lips parched, and his whole body rigid. His breath began to flow heavily through his nostrils, even like the humming of a bee. His senses were withdrawn. Just as a bird flies from one tree to reach another, so the spirit of the King left his body and followed the subtle path projected by its *Vasanas*.

After experiencing a form of swoon, the spirit of *Viduratha* felt that it was endowed with a body, and saw itself being guided by the messengers of death. Finally, it reached the divine city of *Yama* (the God of death). There it heard *Yama* say that this soul has been favored by Goddess *Saraswati*, and therefore, it will not go to the world of sinners.

Yama commanded his messengers to lead the soul of *Viduratha* to the world of *Padma*, so that the soul might enter its previous body (*Padma*).

In this astral journey, *Lila* and *Saraswati* both pursued the soul. The soul was unable to see *Lila* and the Goddess. Having journeyed through vast space, and having crossed numerous world systems, they finally reached the world of *Padma*. Throughout this process, the soul was guided by its *Vasanas*.

Oh *Rama*, the relatives and friends of the departed soul may or may not have performed prayers and rituals for the upliftment of the soul, but the latter felt as if it had been aided by their prayers because of its good Karmas. It is the illusion of *Vasanas* that creates the sense of reality in the unreal objects of the world.

Thus, *Lila* and Goddess *Saraswati* followed the soul of *Viduratha* until it reached the inner part of the palace where the body of *Padma* was lying lifeless. *Lila-2* was eagerly expecting the King to wake up from "sleep."

By the will of Goddess *Saraswati*, *Lila-2* saw both Goddess *Saraswati* and *Li*: as effulgent

Goddesses. The whole place was lit up with a mystic light. *Lila-2* fell at their feet saying, "Oh Goddess, you have given me the gift of my life. Glory to you both."

Then, the two *Lilas* and Goddess *Saraswati* took their respective seats. Soon Goddess *Saraswati* permitted the soul of *Viduratha* to enter the body of *Padma*.

Just as a breeze enters a bamboo reed, so did the soul enter the body of *Padma*. Just as a withered lotus begins to bloom at the advent of a gentle shower, so *Padma* began to revive. The lustre of his face returned. His whole body, which had been enveloped in the dreadful mantle of death, began to pulsate with life. Soon he opened his eyes, slowly sat up, and spoke in a commanding voice, "Is anyone here?"

The two *Lilas* stood up saying, "Yes, we are here, your Majesty, our Emperor. Please tell us what we should do?"

The King asked: Who are you both? And who is the divine being seated on the throne?

Lila (the first) answered: I am *Lila*, your wife. I am ever inseparable from you. This *Lila-2* is also your queen. She has been projected by me for your delight. Please protect her. The Goddess on the throne is the Divine *Saraswati*, the Mother of the three worlds. It is due to our virtuous Karmas that She is present before us.

Hearing this, the King got up from his bed of flowers. Falling at the feet of Goddess *Saraswati*, he said, "Glory to Goddess *Saraswati*. You are the giver of auspiciousness and the remover of all evils. Please grant me long life, prosperity and wisdom."

Goddess *Saraswati* placed her hand on the King's head and said, "Oh Son, may your desires be fulfilled. May your subjects be happy and prosperous under your rulership. Success and prosperity are yours." Thus saying, the Goddess disappeared.

Section 59 – Conclusion of the Story of *Lila*

Sri Vasistha continued: Oh *Rama*, all this happened in only one month from the point of view of *Padma's* world. *Lila* (the first) had been seated all the while in *Samadhi*; she had taken her spiritual journey with Goddess *Saraswati* in her astral body. Listen to what happened to her physical body.

In fifteen days, the body of *Lila* (the first) became lifeless. It fell down like a piece of wood. The ministers and attendants examined the body and said, "Alas, our Queen is dead!"

The people bewailed their loss. They cremated her body. When *Lila* appeared again in her two forms, the ministers and attendants of the royal palace were extremely surprised, yet all this was accepted as "normal," because their minds were influenced by the divine will of Goddess *Saraswati*.

When *Lila* (the first) appeared in *Padma's* world, she did not look for her physical body. She had lost

all identification with the physical body as a result of her spiritual knowledge. However, driven by fructifying Karmas from the past, she manifested a physical body similar to her past form. It was possible for her to do so because she was endowed with *Sat Samkalpa* (invincible will) arising out of Self-realization.

Now listen to what happened when Goddess *Saraswati* disappeared and the King found himself with two *Lilas*.

King *Padma* recognized his former Queen, *Lila* (the first), and embraced her lovingly with his heart filled with joy. The King also welcomed his other Queen, *Lila-2*, with immense joy. Soon the palace resounded with merriment. Long-sustained pathos turned into a fountain of festivity.

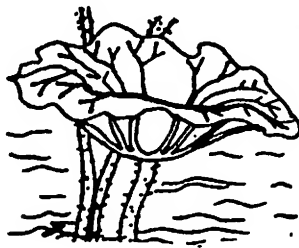
The King and his two Queens (the two *Lilas*) were all enlightened Sages. They ruled the kingdom with righteousness, and the subjects were happy and prosperous during their reign. They continued to live happily; performing their duties and reflecting upon the teachings of Goddess *Saraswati* until the end of their lives.

When their *Prarabdha Karma* (fructifying Karma that sustains the physical body) was exhausted, they attained *Videha Mukti* (disembodied Liberation).

A Sage is ever liberated, but his body continues to appear in this world of relativity. This is known as *Jivan Mukti* (Liberation in life). I.e. performs his duties, and seems to experience pleasure and pain, but he is ever detached from the projected world in

his Consciousness. He sees the world like a passing dream. While living his life in this relative plane, he does not create any new Karma. Therefore, he is not subject to another embodiment. After the termination of *Prarabdha Karma*, even the appearance of his body ceases to exist. This is known as *Videha Mukti* (disembodied Liberation).

Thus, Oh *Rama*, during the reign of King *Padma*, his subjects prospered in every way. They followed the path of virtue, and the standard of their culture was indeed lofty and commendable. This story known as *Mandapokhyana* ("the world within the space of a room"), will remove all the illusions of the mind.



Section 60 – *The Relativity of Time and Space*

Sri Vasistha continued: Oh *Rama*, I have told you the sacred Story of *Lila* in order to show the illusoriness of time and space. The world does not exist from the point of view of intuitional wisdom. When the mind is transcended by wisdom, the reality of the world ceases.

Having negated the world with the light of knowledge, an enlightened Sage becomes one with the Absolute Self. He sees the world blend with *Brahman* even as the clouds that disperse in the blue sky.

The stream of individuality continues to flow on through the process of cause and effect relationships sustained by the unenlightened mind. When the mind is enlightened, the flow of the world-process terminates, and the river of *Jivahood* merges in the boundless ocean of *Brahman* (the Absolute).

You should not think that since this world is created by *Brahma*, it cannot be negated by simple human effort. In fact, the created world exists only for the intellect that is limited by ignorance. When ignorance is removed, the world, freed from the veil of *Maya*, shines as *Brahman*.

This world is illusory. One's desires for the world are empty; they have no substance. Destiny does not exist in reality. There is no past, present or future. When the vision of intuition unfolds, the world melts in *Brahman*.

Sri Rama asked: Oh Sage, I am immensely delighted to listen to your ambrosial words. I am no longer scorched by the fire of cravings. My heart is now flooded with the nectarine rays emanating from the Moon of Spiritual Wisdom.

I would like to hear more of your glorious Wisdom. Please explain to me how it is possible for a person to experience a long duration of time in just a few hours, and a spacious world within the confines of a room.

Sri Vasistha explained: Oh *Rama*, such is the magical potency of the mind that, by the intensity of its conviction, even poison can turn into nectar, and an enemy can turn into a friend. In fact, whenever a person is affected by any object or person, it is because of the workings of his own inner *Samskaras* (impressions).

Led by the impressions of the unconscious, while one person experiences a long duration of time, another person might find it only a short while. There exists time within time, space within space — in fact, world within world — because Consciousness gives rise to innumerable possibilities on the basis of the impressions of the mind.

A person afflicted with the sorrow of separation from a loved one, finds his night long and dreary. But for a joyous person, the night passes as if it were just a moment. Similarly, within a short time, a person might dream of his own birth, growth, and a life abounding with many events.

The entire lifetime of *Manu* is but a *Muhurta* (two and a half hours) of *Prajapati* (the Creator). The lifetime of *Prajapati* is only a day for Lord *Vishnu*. The entire life period of Lord *Vishnu* is only a day of *Shiva*. But for one who has attained mastery over the mind by entering into *Nirvikalpa Samadhi* (the highest superconsciousness), there is neither day nor night.

If you continue to assert that a certain object is sweet, it will become sweet for you. If you continue to sustain a strong feeling that a certain person is your enemy, he will turn out to be your enemy. On the other hand, if you continue to direct good feeling towards an enemy, he will turn out to be your best friend in course of time. This world is nothing but a magic play created by the *Bhavana* (strong feeling) of the mind.

Bhavana can turn even a festive occasion into a pathetic affair. No doubt you have seen how children, while playing joyously, might suddenly take to weeping and crying even though nothing negative has happened.

Human beings are tormented by a ghost of fear that does not exist. They are harassed by nonexistent devils. And behold how the sensual pleasures of a dream appear joyous even though they do not exist!

The world is sustained by *Maya*. It is not capable of restricting the Self. Different beings experience different worlds. These worlds do not contradict each other, just as many people sleeping in the same room can dream so many different things. Therefore, the knowers of the Self have described this world as a unique form of dream.

Sri Rama asked: Oh Sage, in *The Story of Lila*, King *Padma* became King *Viduratha* in a different plane of existence. But King *Viduratha* found himself surrounded by his old ministers, the citizens of his previous country, and various people from his former world. What caused the manifestations of these people?

Sri Vasistha answered: Just as small gusts of wind follow the course of a powerful storm, so numerous names and forms follow the experiences of a powerful spiritual center. The appearances of the world arise in Consciousness as spontaneously as luminosity arises from light. All the souls that were in the past, that are in the present, and that will be in the future, are reflections of the Absolute. When they become reflecting mediums for each other, they cause the development of this complex world-process.

A *Jiva*-consciousness which flows with intensity and speed, unaffected by the objects of the world, attains *Moksha* (Liberation). Otherwise, it continues to flow from one embodiment to another, experiencing the long dream of the world-process.

When the soul moves towards *Brahman*, it is a movement towards the Truth. But when the soul continues to roam in the world-process, it is moving from falsehood to falsehood. The movement towards Truth is more powerful than the movement towards falsehood. This mighty spiritual movement overcomes all little movements in life, just as a mighty river overcomes the small streams, and continues to flow on to the Ocean of the Self.

Section 61 – *The Vanity of Objects*

Sri Rama asked: Oh Sage, it is indeed a wonder that even though the ego has no reality, yet it has brought about one's identification with the body. And though the world is illusory, yet it appears real. A vast world can exist in an atom, and a long duration of time can be experienced in a few moments. Please explain these points more so that the fact of the illusoriness of the objects will be deeply impressed on my intellect.

Sri Vasistha said: The Knower within every human being sees all Its illusions within Itself. This knowing principle is the Self, and all that is known is essentially the Self. *Brahman*, the Unborn, alone exists. The world is illusory and false.

Every form of knowledge or awareness, whether arising on the basis of words, or of their meanings, is essentially the Self. It is due to the limitations imposed by the objects that Consciousness seems to be divided up into multiple objects. One moon seems to become many by reflecting in numerous lakes and ponds.

Golden ornaments are not different from gold, and the waves of the ocean are not different from the ocean. In the same way, the world is not different from *Brahman* (the Absolute Self).

However, one should not interpret this to mean that *Brahman* is the world. In the example of a rope mistaken for a snake, the snake is nothing but the rope, yet the rope cannot be considered the same as the snake that is illusory. In the same way, the world cannot be taken literally as *Brahman*. When the illusion of *Maya* is removed, the world vanishes from one's view, revealing its true Support, *Brahman*.



Lord Rama — The Divine Incarnation of Lord Vishnu

It can be said that toys and various other objects exist in a clod of clay in the hands of a sculptor, or that writing of various types exists in a pot of ink. In the same way, a world is hidden in every ray of the Divine Self.

The perception of the world exists along with the mind. When the mind is “destroyed,” the world ceases to exist. An aspirant brings about the “destruction” of the mind by persistently affirming, “I am the Self.”

Wisdom does not create *Brahman*, it reveals the Reality behind all that exists by removing the veil of ignorance. The objects of the world and the multiplicity of names and forms are illusions created by ignorance. When ignorance is destroyed, the names and forms are negated, and *Brahman* is realized as the indivisible mass of Consciousness.

Just as there are currents both on the surface as well as beneath the surface of an ocean, so there are three states of consciousness (waking, dream, and deep sleep) in every individual soul.

As a person develops detachment towards the objects of pleasure, he continues to advance on the path of wisdom. Gradually, as he grows in dispassion, he ascends the ladder of Liberation.

Liberation is directly dependent upon the removal of desires for the objects of the world. When the very ego-sense is removed by the light of intuitive knowledge, all desires become extinct, and the individual becomes one with the Cosmic Self.

Section 62 – The Vision That Leads to Liberation

Sri Vasistha continued: Oh *Rama*, divide an atom into a millionth part. Even in that minute fragment, there exist thousands of worlds. Again, if you were to seek a minute atom in any of these worlds, you would find that it is indwelt by numerous worlds. There are worlds within worlds. The miracle of Pure Consciousness is bewildering to the human imagination.

All the waves of the past, of the present and of the future, are sustained by the ocean. In the same way, all possible creations in the past, present and future are sustained by Pure Consciousness. Since the world is indwelt by Divine Consciousness, there is order, harmony and an intelligent meaning behind all that is.

It is the Divine Will in the beginning of creation that continues to sustain all the laws of practical life as long as that creation lasts. It is by the power of Divine Will that fire burns, water extinguishes fire, and the breeze blows. The world is controlled by Divine Will. But Divinity is not different from His Will; the creation is not different from the Divinity. All this is *Brahman* – the Divine Self.

The same *Brahman* is described as *Mahasatta* (the great existence), *Mahachiti* (the great consciousness), *Mahashakti* (the great energy), *Mahadrishti* (the great vision), *Mahakriya* (the great action), *Mahodbhava* (the great creation), and

Mahaspanda (the great vibration). But in fact, it is only *Brahman* who pervades this world, assuming different aspects of His Glory. Just as ocean waves are pervaded by the ocean, so this world is pervaded by *Brahman*.

It is merely the illusion of the mind that shows a distinction between the world and *Brahman*. When this illusion is overcome, the world does not exist. *Brahman* alone is.

A wise man should not turn away from his self-effort and rely upon destiny. Even those who seem to be sustained by destiny have attained that state as a result of their self-effort alone. It is by their self-effort that they have given meaning to a fictitious destiny, and thus, they seem to be controlled by it. The Karmas of the past assume the role of destiny in the present life.

A wise man should not stop his efforts to attain the goal of life. Even those who adopt the attitude of a python, and depend upon "destiny" for whatever may develop in their life, cannot remain without effort. Even a python needs to hold its prey in its mouth and swallow it in order to satisfy his hunger. Even the food that is provided by destiny needs to be eaten with a little effort.

A wise man promotes that "destiny" that leads him to Liberation. It is by his self-effort alone that a Yogi learns to control his Pranas, or to ascend the ladder of meditation and *Samadhi*. Therefore, a Yogi controls his "destiny" with his self-effort by urging the Divine Will to lead his efforts to the crowning success of Self-realization.

Section 63 – *Brahman Appears
As the World-process Through Maya*

Sri Vasistha continued: Through the power of *Maya*, *Brahman* is capable of assuming all forms, everywhere and at all times. *Brahman* is all-pervading – the essence of all that exists.

Qualified by the effects of *Maya*, *Brahman* becomes *Jiva* through the internal organs (the mind, intellect, *Chitta* and ego). Through *Sattwa*, He expresses peace and harmony. Through *Rajas*, He manifests attachment and greed. Through *Tamas*, He assumes the role of inert objects.

There is no difference between *Brahman* and the powers of *Brahman* that manifest through *Maya*. The difference is maintained from a practical point of view. For those who are enlightened, there is no difference between *Maya* and the Divine Self who wields the power of *Maya*.

When seen through intuitional vision, this entire world is *Brahman*. It is the ignorant who maintain the difference between *Brahman* and the world-process. The idea that *Brahman* possesses *Maya*, that the world is an expression of *Maya*, or that *Brahman* is the body, and the world a part of His body, are based upon ignorance. There is no such difference between the world and *Brahman*.

Qualified or limited by ignorance, it is Pure Consciousness which assumes the role of the individual soul and continues to flow through the world-process according to the direction of its movement. Led by the instructions of the scriptures,

Mahaspana (the great vibration). But in fact, it is only *Brahman* who pervades this world, assuming different aspects of His Glory. Just as ocean waves are pervaded by the ocean, so this world is pervaded by *Brahman*.

It is merely the illusion of the mind that shows a distinction between the world and *Brahman*. When this illusion is overcome, the world does not exist. *Brahman* alone is.

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Section 63 – *Brahman Appears
As the World-process Through Maya*

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Qualified by the effects of Maya, *Brahman* becomes *Jiva* through the internal organs (the mind, intellect, *Chitta* and ego). Through Sattwa, He expresses peace and harmony. Through Rajas, He manifests attachment and greed. Through Tamas, He assumes the role of inert objects.

There is no difference between *Brahman* and the powers of *Brahman* that manifest through Maya. The difference is maintained from a practical point of view. For those who are enlightened, there is no difference between Maya and the Divine Self who wields the power of Maya.

When seen through intuitional vision, this entire world is *Brahman*. It is the ignorant who maintain the difference between *Brahman* and the world-process. The idea that *Brahman* possesses Maya, that the world is an expression of Maya, or that *Brahman* is the body, and the world a part of His body, are based upon ignorance. There is no such difference between the world and *Brahman*.

Qualified or limited by ignorance, it is Pure Consciousness which assumes the role of the individual soul and continues to flow through the world-process according to the direction of its movement. Led by the instructions of the scriptures,

it rises to the expanding horizons of its intrinsic glory. On the other hand, driven by the illusions of the ego, and going against scriptural wisdom, it continues to whirl in the cycles of birth and death.

Whatever becomes deeply impressed upon the mind is considered one's duty. One follows a course of movement, whether it be positive or negative. All the developments in one's life are results of the workings of his own will. And more truly, they are expressions of his own intrinsic Self, since he is essentially the Self, and not this limited personality.

Section 65 – *Consciousness is the Reality Behind the Mind and Objects*

Sri Vasistha continued: O Rama, through the veil of ignorance, the illusory mind arises from *Brahman*. Having arisen, the mind projects the world-process. All objects of enjoyment are essentially mental creations. The entire visible world is sustained by the vibrations of the mind.

When the mind is transcended, all multiplicities of this world such as *Brahma* (the creator), *Jiva* (the individual soul), mind, Maya (cosmic illusion), subject, action, and the world-process – all disappear. *Brahman*, the Substratum, alone remains.

The individual soul is like a tiny whirlpool in the boundless ocean of its own essential being – *Brahman*, the Absolute Self. Since it is unstable, it is illusory and false. But because it is perceptible in this practical world, it is considered "real."

The shifting dreams of a dreamer are illusory; the dreamer himself is the reality behind the dreams. In the same way, *Brahman* is the reality behind the long dream of the world-process.

This world is neither existent nor non-existent; it is neither created nor dissolved. It is an expression of the illusory *Chitta* (mind-stuff). It is false.

This nameless, limitless *Brahman* becomes, as it were, slightly inclined to objectivity. Thus, *Chitta* (mind-stuff) is formed. From *Chitta* there arises the *Jiva* (individual soul). *Jiva* gives rise to the ego-sense, which, through further intensification, assumes the form of an individual mind. The objects of the world towards which the *Jiva* develops the attitudes of attachment and "mineness," arise from the same *Chitta*. This involvement in illusion is the cause of bondage, and therefore, of release as well.

There is no difference between the Absolute Self and the individual soul. There is no difference between the individual soul and the *Chitta* (mind-stuff). There is no difference between the soul, its body and its Karmas. All this is Pure Consciousness.

The human body is made of Karma. Karma is nothing but a vibratory state of the mind. The mind is nothing but the ego-self. The ego-self is nothing but the *Chitta* (the mind-stuff, or the Cosmic Mind). The Cosmic Mind is nothing but the Self, who is supremely auspicious, all-pervading, and eternal.



Sages Descend into the Royal Court of King Dasharatra
to Listen to the Teachings of Sage Vasistha



INTERNATIONAL YOGA SOCIETY

3rd February 1974 was the most auspicious day for spiritual

world. On this very day a great idea flashed in mind of Shashi Bhushan Mishra – the young organiser of a satsanga sabha who founded Swami Jyotirmayananda Yoga Samstham for disseminating spiritual message of his respected guru H.H. Sri Swami Jyotirmayananda. This became founding stone of IYS in India.

INTERNATIONAL YOGA SOCIETY

As early as 1969 Swamiji had laid the foundation of IYS in U.S.A. In 1978 Sri Swamiji visited India and founded International Yoga Society at Delhi. It was registered at Baroda 'Swami Jyotirmayananda Yoga Samsthan' amalgamated in it. Since then society started its regular activities from Patna (Bihar) India. Conducting satsanga and publishing monthly Hindi Journal 'Yoganjali' were main functions.

In 1984 Society got a piece of land (5000 sq. yards) in donation for constructing an Ashram, at Lal Bagh, Loni, Ghaziabad, on out skirt of Metropolitan area of Delhi.

ACTIVITIES AT THE SOCIETY

PUBLICATIONS: - Yoga Jyoti Press is always engaged in bringing out spiritual books and a monthly Hindi Magazine - Yoganjali.

SATSANGA: - Every day from 6:00 to 7:00 in the morning - Asana, Pranayama, meditation and prayer classes are held. Weekly Satsanga is conducted on every Sunday (9 to 11 in morning) in which discourses on the Gita, Ramayana, Yoga Vasistha, meditation and other aspects of Sadhna are given.

MEDICAL SERVICE: - Community is served through Swami Jyotirmayananda Hospital-a Charitable Clinic by qualified doctors. There is also an immunization centre for children-

A HOME FOR EVERYONE: - *Ashram is an ideal home where selfdependent persons interested in spiritual life can pass their days in Sadhna and Seva.*

SADHANA SHIVIR: - Residential spiritual camps are organised for imparting practical knowledge, guidance in sadhana and solution to various practical problems.

DIVYA JYOTI PUBLIC SCHOOL: - Society runs a primary school in which besides imparting formal education emphasis is

YOGA VASISTHA

given on integral development of personality.

HOME STUDY COURSE :- Integral Yoga is being taught through correspondence course to interested person. Three sixmonthly Courses are Conducted.

JOYTIRMAYANANDA GRAM VIKAS KENDRA

It is a Socio-Spiritual and Cultural Centre in Village Dumari Buzurg (Dist. Saran, Bihar, 38Km from Patna) It is the birth Place of Sri Swami Ji. This Centre is a source of inspiration for Men, women and youth of the Village. There is a Satsanga hall, Library, free dispensary where regular activities are conducted.

This centre runs swami Lalitananda girls school where free education is given to poor girls. Centre also provides free milk, breakfast, lunch, uniform, stationaries and books to all students.

Adult education - Regular adult education is given to village ladies training centre also runs a free music and vocational training to girls and ladies of the village.

LALITA JYOTI ANATHALAY

Under inspiring guidance of Swami Lalita Nanda International Yoga Society is serving humanity through this Orphanage for uncarred girls and abandoned ladies at Gannaur in Sonapat District of Haryana.



INTERNATIONAL YOGA SOCIETY

Besides giving quality education and vocational training, it also provides excellent opportunities for becoming a Self dependent and Selfrespecting member of the Society. It has a modern building in 3 acre land giving homely and very comortable living to 64 homeless girls and 30 abandoned ladis. •

MANAGEMENT

This Society is controlled and governed by a board of trustees under Presidentship of H.H. Sri Swami Jyotirmayananda and Vice-President Swami Lalitananda. Sri Swamiji has authorised his ardent devotee Yogiratna Dr. Shashi Bhushan Mishra, M.B.B.S., D.Ortho. SRF (ICMR) and Dr. Pratibha Mishra, M.B.B.S., D.G.O., M.D. to look after routine affairs and conduct spiritual classes as managing trustee of the society.

Our Overseas Headquarter

The Yoga Research Foundation and the main ashram lie in the southwest section of Miami, (Florida, USA) two minutes from the University of Miami and 15 minutes from the Miami International Airport. Trees and exotic plants, reminiscent of the forest hermitages of the ancient sages on a two and a half-acre plot surround the main ashram. Adjoining are subsidiary ashrams that house student residents and Foundation guests. The grounds are picturesque, abounding with tall eucalyptus and oak trees, a fragrant mango orchard giving shelter to numerous birds and squirrels, and a lake of lotus blooms reflecting the expansion of the sky. In this serene yet dynamic environment, the holy presence of Swami Jyotirmayananda fills the atmosphere with the silent, powerful message of Truth, and the soul is nurtured and nourished, allowing for a total education and evolution of one's inner Self.

YOGA VASISTHA

Despite the international scope of his activities, Swamiji still maintains an intimate setting at his ashram in Miami that allows aspirants to have the privilege of studying and working under his direct guidance. The Ashram provides a perfect venue for any sincere aspirant seeking inner enrichment through self-work. In the lecture hall of the Foundation, Swami Jyotirmayananda personally conducts an intense weekly schedule of classes in Bhagavad Gita, Yoga Vasistha, Mahabharata, Upanishads, Panchadashi, the Bible, Raja Yoga, Hatha Yoga and meditation.

With a work/study scholarship, qualified students are able to attend all classes conducted by Swamiji tuition-free. In return, students devote their energy and talents to the Foundation's noble mission by serving in the bookshop, offices, press, computer and publication facilities.

ABOUT SWAMI JYOTIRMAYANANDA

Swami Jyotirmayananda was born on February 3, 1931, in a pious family in Dumari Buzurg, District Saran, Bihar, India—a northern province sanctified by the great Lord Buddha. From his early childhood he showed source of inspiration to all who came in contact with him. Side by side with his studies and practical duties, he reflected upon life's deeper purpose.

An overwhelming feeling to serve humanity through a spiritual life led him to embrace the ancient order of Sanyasa on February 3, 1953, at the age of 22. Living in the Himalayan retreats by the sacred River Ganges, he practised intense austerities. In tireless service of his Guru, Sri Swami Sivananda Maharaj, Swamiji taught at the Yoga Vedanta Forest Academy as a professor of religion. In addition to giving lectures on the Upanishads, Raja Yoga and all the important scriptures of India, he was the editor of the Yoga

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Vedanta Journal. Ever able to assist foreign students in their understanding of Yoga and Vedanta, his intuitive perception of their problems endeared him to all.

Swamiji's exemplary life, love towards all beings, great command of spiritual knowledge, and dynamic expositions on Yoga and Vedanta philosophy attracted enormous interest all over India. He frequently lectured by invitation at the All India Vedanta Conferences in Delhi, Amritsar, Ludhiana, and in other parts of India.

In 1962, after many requests, Swami Jyotirmayananda came to the West to spread the knowledge of India. As founder of Sanatan Dharma Mandir in Puerto Rico (1962-1969), Swamiji rendered unique service to humanity through his regular classes, weekly radio lectures in English and in Spanish, and numerous TV appearances.

In March, 1969, Swamiji moved to Miami, Florida, U.S.A and established the ashram that has become the center for the international activities of the Yoga Research Foundation. Branches of this organization now exist throughout the world and spread the teachings of yoga to aspirants everywhere.

Today Swami Jyotirmayananda occupies a place of the highest order among the international men of wisdom. He is well-recognized as the foremost proponent of Integral Yoga, a way of life and thought that synthesizes the various aspects of the ancient yoga tradition into a comprehensive plan of personality integration. Through insightful lectures that bring inspiration to thousands who attend the conferences, camps and philosophical gatherings, Swamiji shares the range and richness of his knowledge of the great scriptures of the world.

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